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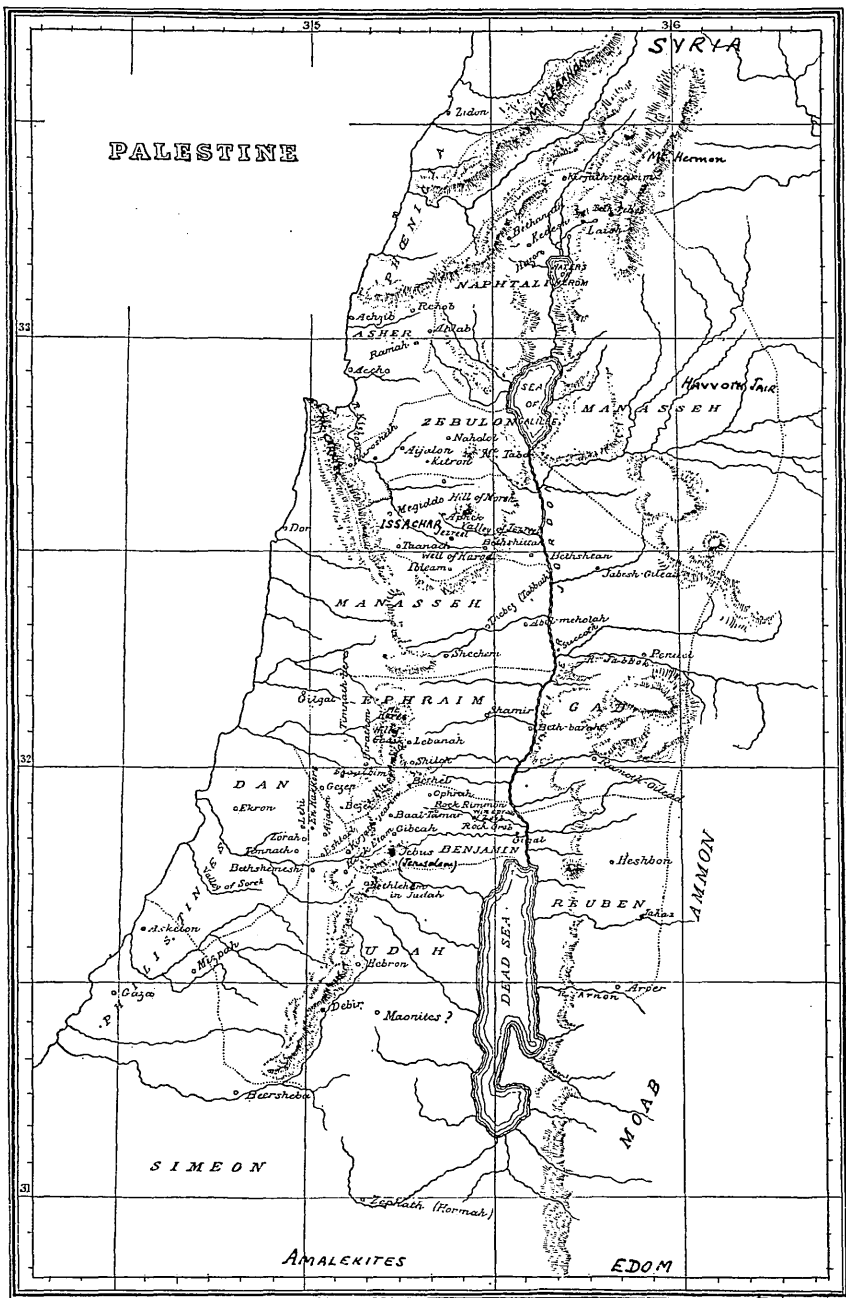
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THE BOOK OF JUDGES



THE BOOK OF JUDGES

BY

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London

JAMES NISBET & CO.

21 BERNERS STREET

1895

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PREFACE

BY THE GENERAL EDITOR

THE General Editor deems it right to say that he does not hold himself responsible for the opinions expressed by the Editors in the various books. His aim and endeavour has been to select the most suitable men for the work, and then to leave them unfettered in the exercise of their own judgment, only reserving to himself a careful revision of the notes, and the privilege of making occasional suggestions.

He believes that it is better for the individualities of each Editor to contribute to that freshness and variety of handling, which is so much to be desired, even at the sacrifice of a little uniformity in detail.

THE POPLARS, ALSAGER, CHESHIRE.

PREFACE

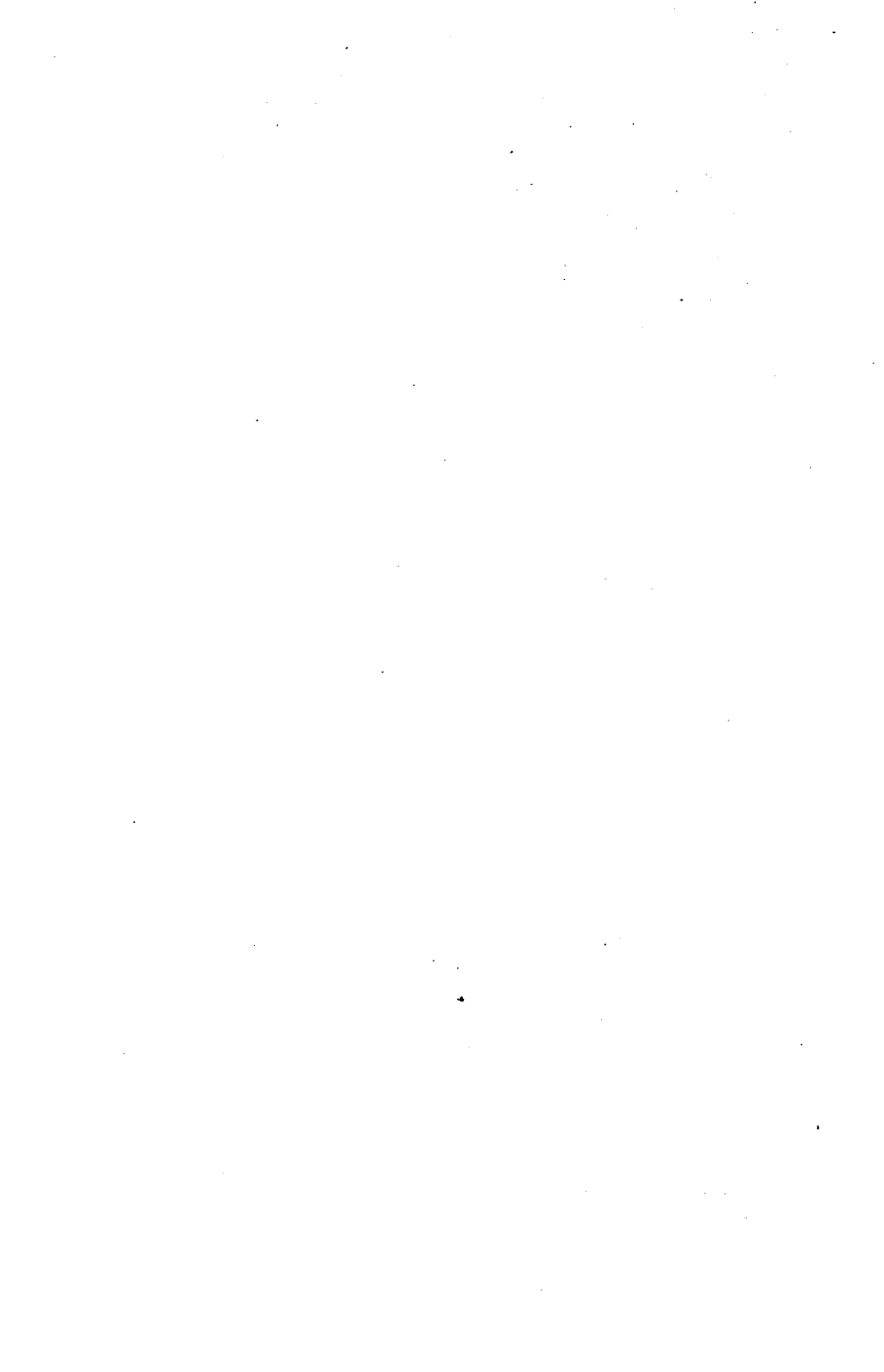
THE chief criticism that may be anticipated on this little book is probably that, either through the author's ignorance or of set purpose, the latest theories are seldom put forward. Apart from the imputation of ignorance, which is no doubt partly true, it is more to the point that a book, intended for the instruction of boys and girls, has aimed at stating what is fairly certain though old, rather than what is still doubtful though new. My hope is that the discriminating judgment I have striven to exercise may have good results on those who use this book, and that the young may still in these critical days learn to love the good and hate the evil from the Book of Judges as well as from other portions of God's written Word.

I am under a great debt of obligation, as the notes will discover, to the very able Commentary of Keil and Delitzsch (English translation), as well as to several other writers and commentators (*e.g.*, Dr. Thornton in S.P.C.K. Commentary, and Bishop Hervey in the Speaker's).

For the map I am indebted to the aid of Messrs. West, Newman, & Co., who have based it upon that issued by the Palestine Exploration Fund.

C. L. FELTOE.

FORNHAM ALL SAINTS',
Ascension Tide, 1894.



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THE BOOK OF JUDGES.

THIS is in some ways one of the most interesting books in the Old Testament, and at the same time one that presents problems of no ordinary difficulty in the matter of history as well as of morality. The vivid and life-like narratives will always make it attractive, especially to the minds of the young. It is not till one comes to reflect upon the matter that the questions of its relation to the other historical books, and of its relation to our modern notions of right and wrong, will suggest themselves as requiring settlement.

In the first place, one cannot help being struck by the almost complete absence of any trace of cohesion between the tribes as a whole (except once in wreaking vengeance on one of their own number, chaps. xix.-xxi.). Though the interval between the death of Joshua and the period covered by these narratives is quite short, the tribes seem already to have fallen away entirely from common, united action into anarchy and confusion. Instead of following up the victories of Joshua and consolidating their commonwealth, each tribe separately seems to have passed through a long and very troublous time of alternately suppressing and being suppressed by the various nations whom they found in possession of the territory assigned to them. In fact, the theory has been advanced* that in Judges compared with Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua we have traces of two different traditions of the occupation of Canaan, one referring it to the times of Moses and Joshua, the other to a later period. Compare, for instance, Numb. xxi. 1-3 with Judges i. 16, 17; Numb. xxxii. 41 and Deut. iii. 14 with Judges x. 3-5; Josh. x. 38, 39, and xv. 15-19 with Judges i. 9, 11-15; Josh. xi. 1-14 with Judges iv. Whether

* Cross, Hints to Readers of Old Testament, pp. 143-145. He does not say whether the theory is his own or not.

this is so or not, the gradual and tedious conquest of the land suggested by Judges is obviously more in accordance with the usual course of events than the almost instantaneous occupation attributed to Joshua, the effects of which must have been completely undone very shortly after his death, if we accept the ordinary view.

No less remarkable is the absence of recognition of the Mosaic Law and ceremonial which marks the book. In fact, even the worship of the One True God, Jehovah, seems to have been of the most imperfect kind. "Every one did what was right in his own eyes" in religion no less than in secular matters. Periods of transition, especially after the loss of great leaders like Moses and Joshua, are, we know, often marked by such characteristics as this, by a temporary sinking to an even lower level than before. The process by which the children of Israel were then and afterwards gradually shaped and disciplined into fitness for their noble destiny in the history of the world was a long and tortuous one.

The same consideration will help to explain the almost barbaric state of morality revealed by the records of this book. Jephthah's rash vow, Jael's breach of the law of hospitality, &c., can only be defended not by a reference to an ideal standard of good conduct, but by the remembrance of the turbulent times in which they lived, and of the degraded tribes with which they had to deal.

THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE BOOK

is attributed by the Talmud to Samuel, but there is little ground for the statement, and it is now generally discarded.* The compiler of the book in its present form must have had a variety of independent documents, some earlier in date than others, at hand, as a reference to the subjoined analysis of Contents will show. Professor Ryle† considers that "the compilation of the whole work belongs to the literary energy of a period later than that of the editor of Deuteronomy," and adds, "to attempt to decide the date of the compiler with any precision would be out of the question. Perhaps we should assign his work to the latter part

* There is, however, no absolute reason against Samuel's having had to do with the book in an earlier stage than its present form.

† Canon of Old Testament, pp. 97, 98.

of the exilic period" (*i.e.*, between 535 and 445 B.C.). Professor Lumby * is inclined to assign the book to the reign of Hezekiah (B.C. 726-698).

THE CONTENTS.

There are three main divisions, the style of each of which is distinctive :—

I. **Acts of the Tribes** (chaps. i.-ii. 5), drawn apparently from the same source as Josh. xv., xvi.

II. **Acts of the Judges** (ii. 6-xvi.), with introduction (ii. 6-iii. 6), "edited or compiled by one who writes in the spirit of the Deuteronomic Law" (Ryle), *i.e.*, of later date than I.

III. **Two Appendices** (xvii.-xxi.), separate narratives of the same style as I.

THE CHRONOLOGY

is incapable of being exactly settled on the existing evidence. On the one hand, Acts xiii. 20 gives a period of 450 as apparently the common reckoning of "the times of the Judges" in the days of the Apostles. This result is arrived at by simply adding together all the alternating periods of rests and servitudes given in Judges (= 410) + 40 years for Eli's judgeship. But it is obvious that no dependence can be placed on the numbers given in the book, which, at the best, are only approximately correct : † besides which it is almost certain that some of the occurrences recorded were contemporary with others.

On the other hand, in 1 Kings vi. 1 the whole period between the Exodus and the building of Solomon's Temple is stated as 480 years. Here the LXX. read 440, and there is good reason to suspect the presence of an even post-Christian interpolation into the text. If, however, it be genuine, the calculation is clearly based on a different method to the previous one, and the period covered by the Book of Judges cannot be more than about three hundred years in all.

Where all is conjecture, there is nevertheless a good show of reason in the arguments of Lord Arthur Hervey in the Speaker's

* Cambridge Companion to the Bible, p. 49.

† A good instance of this is Judges xi. 26, because the number seems diminished rather than exaggerated as usual (see note *in loco*). It is possible that the words "three hundred years" are a later interpolation.

Commentary, who is inclined to reduce the length of time as low as 160 years, and to consider the number of contemporary occurrences recorded somewhat larger than most commentators. His main argument is drawn from the genealogies given in Scripture (*e.g.*, those of David, Ruth iv. 18-22; 1 Chron. ii. 10-15; S. Matt. i. 4-6; S. Luke iii. 30-32), which combine to indicate an average of seven or eight generations from the entrance into Canaan to the commencement of David's reign (*viz.*, from 240 to 260 years): from them he deducts one hundred years for Joshua, Samuel, and Saul, and thus leaves about one and a half centuries for the Judges.

TABLE OF DELIVERANCES.

<i>District Delivered.</i>	<i>Oppressor.</i>	<i>Deliverer.</i>	
The South of Palestine? .	Cushan-rishathaim, King of Mesopotamia.	Othniel.	1
Benjamin and Ephraim? .	Eglon, King of Moab.	Ehud.	2
The South-West . . .	Philistines.	Shamgar.	3
North and Central Tribes .	Jabin, King of Hazor.	Deborah and Barak.	4
North and Central Tribes .	Midianites.	Gideon. (Jerubbaal.)	5
Strife between Abimelech, Gideon's son, and the men of Shechem.			6
Central Tribes . . .	?	Tola.	7
Gilead	?	Jair.	8
Gilead	Ammonites.	Jephthah.	9
Judah or neighbourhood of Bethlehem? . . .	?	Ibzan.	10
Zebulun	?	Elon.	11
Ephraim?	?	Abdon.	12
Dan	Philistines.	Samson.	13

THE JUDGES.

The men who are designated "judges" (Heb. *shophetim*), and with whose exploits this book is mainly occupied, exercised functions more like those of a king than those of a civil or criminal judge: they delivered the nation, or certain parts of the nation, from the oppression of enemies; and when they had set free the nation, or any portion of it, they administered the government usually during the rest of their life. Similar officers were found among the Tyrians, whom Josephus (c. Ap. i. 21) calls *δικασταί*, and at Carthage called *suffetes*, according to Livy (xxvii. 37, xxx. 7); but in Israel the judges were usually conspicuous, according to the sacred historian, for acting under the influence of the Spirit of the Lord, and were frequently endued with miraculous power for their great duties. They were raised up as occasion required, now here, now there; and there was no continuous succession of them, though sometimes there are certain traces of one, as in the case of Tola and Jair, who followed Abimelech; and Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon, who followed Jephthah. Sometimes the periods covered by different judges were partly contemporaneous. The woman, Deborah, who incited Barak to action, exercised priestly functions; so also did Eli and Samuel, who, though not included in the Book of Judges, belonged in many ways to the period. Shamgar and Samson performed heroic acts and feats of strength in war which earned them the title of Judge, but do not appear to have taken part in ruling the nation; while others took no part in war, and confined themselves to government. Speaking generally, then, we may say that the Judges stand midway in the development of the Jewish nation between the patriarchal system, in which God alone was their Governor, and the kingly system, in which, inevitable though it was, the supremacy of Jehovah always seemed in some measure to have been superseded.

THE PHILISTINES.

According to Gen. x. 14, the Philistines traced their origin to Egypt (Mizraim) through the Caslushim; but from a comparison of this passage with Jer. xlvii. 4 and Amos ix. 7 it would appear either that the Caslushim and the Caphtorim (who in Gen., *l.c.*, are mentioned immediately after them) were intermixed tribes,

or that the words ("whence went forth the Philistines," R.V.) are a gloss, which has been brought into the body of the text in a slightly wrong place.

The name is said to be from an Aethiopic root meaning "to migrate;" and if this is the right derivation, the Septuagint version is noticeably exact in its frequent appellation of them as "the foreigners or aliens" (ἀλλόφυλοι).

In Jer. xlvii. 4 they are described as "the remnant of the isle (margin, 'sea-coast') of Caphtor" (*cf.* Amos ix. 7), and of the various theories advanced as to the geographical position of Caphtor, the likeliest seems to be that which places it on the north coast of Egypt, in the Delta of the Nile; the Greek name for the whole country (Αἴγυπτος) being thought, in fact, to represent the Hebrew Ī-Kaphtor (isle of Caphtor). In which case the Egyptian origin of the Philistines seems to be fairly well established. The two objections to it are—(1) that their language is held to have been Semitic (like the other inhabitants of Palestine), not Hamite (like the Egyptian); (2) that they are frequently spoken of as "the uncircumcised," whereas the Egyptians seem (to some extent at least) to have practised circumcision. But it is not improbable (1) that they would gradually adopt the language of the Canaanites among whom they lived; and (2) that circumcision was not introduced into Egypt until after the Philistines had migrated from it, even if it was ever generally prevalent there (*cf.* Jer. ix. 25, 26).

We read of the Philistines as a tribe of peaceful shepherds in the days of Abraham at Gerar, at the extreme south-west of Palestine (Gen. xxi., xxvi.); but by the times of the Judges they had pushed their way further north into the fertile plain of the Shephelah, out of which, according to Deut. ii. 23, they seem to have driven an earlier nation called the "Avvim;" and unless we reckon two separate invasions of the Philistines into Southern Palestine (an earlier and a later), it was probably in this process of occupying the Shephelah that they changed into the strong and formidable nation of which we hear so much in the books of Judges and 1 Samuel.

The five cities of the Philistines (Gaza, Gath, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron), each governed by its own prince (*seren*, or *sār*), and surrounded by its own territory, seem to have formed a sort of confederacy, especially for purposes of war. Beyond

this, little is known of their institutions, except that in religion they were much given to idolatry; their chief deities being Dagon (the fish god),* Ashtaroath, and Beelzebub.

In the distribution of the Land of Promise among the tribes, the Shephelah was assigned to Judah, but except possibly in one doubtful passage (Judges i. 18), there is no sign that the conquest of any portion of it was permanently effected till the reign of David. The later notices of the Philistines to be found in the Scriptures do not belong to our present work.

ACTS OF THE TRIBES.

Chapters i. and ii. 1-5.

This passage is a sort of introduction to the book, and continues the history of the war with the Canaanites found in Josh. xii. An account is given of the way in which the various tribes (all except that of Issachar) dealt with the Canaanite nations among whom their lot was cast. First of all, it is related how, upon the death of Joshua, the tribe of Judah was pointed out by Jehovah to be the leader of the others in driving out the heathen. Thereupon Simeon invited Judah to help him in expelling the Canaanites and Perizzites under Adoni-bezek. They came upon them in Bezek and smote them: Adoni-bezek himself fled, but was captured and treated to the same cruel torture as he had previously subjected seventy chieftains to. He had cut off their thumbs and great toes and made them feed like dogs under his table. On being himself thus mutilated, he acknowledged the justice of the retribution. He was brought to Jerusalem, where he died.

We next have the narrative of the partial conquest of Jerusalem by Judah, and the capture of Hebron (or Kirjath-arba) and Debir (or Kirjath-sepher). Caleb's promise of his daughter Achsah to the man who should take the latter city, and Othniel's winning of the prize, is repeated from the Book of Joshua; as is likewise the bride's request to her father on the marriage-day that he would give her land containing "springs of water" as her dowry, since her new home was to be in drougthy land towards the south.

* According to Professor Sayce (*Higher Criticism*, pp. 325-327) the popular notion is wrong: Dagon was "a god of corn."

Next are described the various vicissitudes of the conquest of the country by the tribes. The **Kenites** quitted Jericho with the children of Judah, and dwelt among the native population "in the wilderness of Judah, which is in the south of Arad." **Judah** joined **Simeon** in taking Zephath (or Hormah). **Judah** also took the three Philistine cities, Gaza, Askelon, and Ekron, but do not seem to have been able to retain them long, owing to the war-strength of the Philistines. **Benjamin** did not succeed in expelling the Jebusites out of their part of Jerusalem, and were content to live side by side with them there. **Joseph** got possession of Luz (afterwards Bethel) by treachery: they set "watchers" "to spy out" the city, who by false pretences persuaded an inhabitant, who came out, to show them "the entrance into the city." In the sacking of the city that ensued this man and his family were spared; and he went and founded a city among the Hittites, which he called Luz after his old home.

Manasseh, **Ephraim**, **Zebulun**, **Asher**, and **Naphtali** were all, we are told, equally unsuccessful in driving out the native tribes: the policy they adopted was to live among them, and as they grew stronger to make use of them by putting them to task-work or making them tributary. **Dan**, in the south, was even less successful against the Amorites, who kept them out of their lot almost altogether, driving them out of the fertile lowlands into the barren hill-country (see chap. xviii.).

All these comparative failures to exterminate the Canaanites led to the utterance of a solemn rebuke and warning by "the angel of the Lord," who "came up from Gilgal" to a place where the children of Israel seem to have been met together for a sacrifice and service of humiliation. At his words the assembly wept, and the place was called "Bochim" (weepers) in memory of the occasion.

Notes on the Text.

i. 1. **Asked of the Lord**, probably by Urim, for which see Exod. xxviii. 30; Numb. xxvii. 21; 1 Sam. xxviii. 6; also 1 Sam. xxiii. 9 and xxx. 7.

5. **Adoni-bezek**. **Adoni** = Lord of: supposed by some to be the same as the Greek **Adonis**. There is (probably) another **Bezek** mentioned in 1 Sam. xi. 8.

6, 7. The particular retributive punishment inflicted on Adoni-

bezek seems, from what we see on Assyrian and Egyptian monuments, to have been a mark of captivity. The mutilation would prevent a man's wielding weapons or going on march, and so disqualify him for military service.

8. **Jerusalem.** The city of the Jebusites had been assigned partly to Benjamin, partly to Judah : neither part was exclusively in the invaders' possession till the time of David (2 Sam. v. 6-9).

9. **A.V., mountain ; R.V., hill-country.**

A.V., valley ; R.V., lowland.

10-15. A very similar account in Josh. xv. 13-19. **Kiriath** = city. Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai were sons of Anak, according to Joshua, *l.c.*

11. **Debir** = word city ; **Kiriath-sepher** = city of books (*cf.* Josh. xv. 49) ; **Kiriath-sannah** = city of precepts.

13. **Othniel** (God is strength) was *either* a "son of Kenaz" or Kenizzite like Caleb (Josh. xiv. 6), and himself Caleb's younger brother, in which case he married his niece, Achsah (bracelet), or his father's name was "Kenaz," who was Caleb's younger brother, and then he and his wife were first cousins.

15. **A blessing**, margin of R.V., **a present.** The importance of water-springs as a marriage portion in a dry land will be easily understood.

Instead of **for thou hast given me a south land**, the R.V. now reads **thou hast set me** (*sc.* in marriage) **in the land of the South** (which is droughty). Dr. Tristram thinks he has identified the spot near Hebron.

16. **The city of palm-trees**, viz., Jericho ; so also in iii. 13 and Deut. xxxiv. 3. The palms are gone now. **A.V., father-in-law ; R.V., brother-in-law** (see iv. 11).

17. **Hormah** (destruction). Another account of this incident is given in Numb. xxi. 1-3, perhaps by anticipation, perhaps from a different source (see p. 1).

18. **A.V., coast ; R.V., border.**

27. **Towns**, Heb. **daughters.** These were the outlying "hamlets" or "townships."

Bethshean, a very strong city lying between Mount Gilboa and the Jordan. The same as the "Bethshan" to whose walls the bodies of Saul and his sons were fastened by the Philistines (1 Sam. xxxi. 10). In later days it was called Scythopolis, as if its inhabitants were Scythians.

28. A.V., **tribute** ; R.V., **task-work** : so also in vers. 30, 33, and 35, for "tributary" the margin of R.V. suggests "subject to task-work."

31. **Accho**, afterwards **Ptolemais**, now **Acre**. Accho, Zidon, &c., were towns on the Phœnician seaboard.

36. A.V., **the going up to Akrabbim** ; R.V., **the ascent of Akrabbim** (or Scorpion height). This was a range of cliffs south of the Dead Sea.

A.V., **from the rock** ; margin R.V., from **Sela**. Identified by some with the city of Petra, by others with the rock in the wilderness of Zin smitten by Moses (Numb. xx.).

ii. 1. A.V., **an angel of the Lord** ; R.V., **the angel** (margin, "a messenger"). By some thought to be a prophet, by others (and perhaps with more probability, in consideration of the authoritative way in which he speaks, "I made," "I spake," &c.) a supernatural visitor (*cf.* chap. vi. 12, 14).

Bochim = weepers.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ACTS OF THE JUDGES.

Chapters ii. 6-iii. 6.

For a short period after the death of Joshua, till the survivors of his generation had passed away, and with them the vivid recollection of all Jehovah's great work for Israel, the people continued to serve the Lord ; but with the next generation came a serious falling away into idolatry and consequent immorality. In fact, the grandson of Aaron (xx. 28) was still living when this state of things began, and perhaps even the grandson (or great-grandson) of Moses (xviii. 30)—strange as it is to relate it—was one of the earliest offenders. Living among and even intermarrying with the heathen, how could they hope to keep themselves and their religion pure? "They forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtaroth" [in which names are included probably not only the Phœnician objects of worship (the sun and the moon), but also those of the various Canaanitish nations]. And the consequence of this was the righteous anger of Jehovah, who "sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not stand before them." And yet for all that Jehovah in His mercy gave them opportunities of returning to Him. From time to time He "raised up judges which saved

them from their oppressors ;” but again and again they failed to use the opportunity, and “ceased not from their stubborn way.”

All this is a sad story of neglected privileges and blessings ; but the sacred narrative expressly reminds us that the leaving of the nations as a thorn in the Israelites’ side was designed by the Lord as a necessary, a terrible and yet in the end a most efficient discipline and probation : by them He proved Israel, whether they would “keep the way of the Lord to walk therein as their fathers did keep it or not.” The lesson, we may add, was not finally learnt in perfection for many centuries ; indeed, not until the return from the Captivity was the nation perfectly sickened of polytheism and idolatry, and in this way at last made ready in God’s providence for the coming of the Messiah.

List of the Nations left by Jehovah “to prove Israel by them” in the later generations and “to teach them war.” The **Philistines** in the south, all the various **Canaanites**, the **Sidonians**, the **Hivites** in the north : these two groups had never been to any degree driven out. In the centre and south-east were other Canaanite tribes, **Hittites** and **Amorites** and **Perizzites** and **Hivites** and **Jebusites**. Among these, after a partial attempt at expulsion, the Israelites lived and intermarried, and from these, supported by one or other of the two former groups, they reaped the fruits of their disobedience.

Notes on the Text.

7-9. See Josh. xxiv. 29-31.

11. **Baalim** (lords), plural of Baal : so **Ashtaroth** (consorts) in v. 13 plural of Ashtoreth.

20-23. A different reason (viz., lest the wild beasts should multiply, if the land was suddenly depopulated) is given in Exod. xxiii. 29, 30, and repeated in Deut. vii. 22.

iii. 3. **Five lords of the Philistines**, viz., at Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath and Ekron. See Josh. xiii. 3.

Baal-Hermon, or Baal-Gad (Josh. xi. 17, xiii. 5). Perhaps the modern Baalbek, where there is a famous temple in ruins.

Hamath (afterwards Epiphania), a city on the Orontes. **The entering in** (or entrance) **of Hamath** is a plain between Hermon on the east and Lebanon on the west, which was considered the northern boundary of Palestine.

THE JUDGESHIP OF OTHNIEL.

Chapter iii. 7-11.

The idolatrous practices of the children of Israel kindled Jehovah's wrath, as we have seen. The first recorded consequence of this is that they were "sold into the hand of Cushan-rishathaim, King of Mesopotamia," who made them serve him eight years. At the end of that time, when "they cried unto the Lord," He raised up a deliverer for them in the person of that Othniel, the son of Kenaz, of whose exploits and marriage we have already heard in chap. i. 12-15 (Acts of the Tribes, p. 7). "The Spirit of the Lord came upon him," and in the strength of that Spirit "he went out to war," and "his hand prevailed against" the oppressor so that "the land had rest forty years," until apparently the death of Othniel left them again unprotected and ungoverned. How far the benefits of Othniel's efforts and influence were felt beyond his own tribe or district is doubtful, but the commencement of the next story (chap. iii. 12) speaks of the subsequent relapse into idolatry in such a way as to imply a somewhat extensive sphere of action.

Notes on the Text.

7. A.V., **the groves**; R.V., **the Asheroth**, referring to Exod. xxxiv. 13, where the reading is **Asherim**, thus explained in margin, "probably the wooden symbols of a goddess Asherah;" by some identified with Ashtoreth.

8. **Mesopotamia** (Greek=land between two rivers), in Heb. **Aram-naharaim** with same meaning. The two rivers are Euphrates and Tigris.

9. A.V., **deliverer**; R.V., **saviour**; and so elsewhere.

11. **Forty years**. The same period of rest is given in v. 31 and viii. 28; twice the number of years in iii. 30. There is a tendency in Hebrew chronology to divide the history up into equal sections; so there are three periods of forty years in Moses' life, the Israelites wandered forty years in the wilderness, and so on.

THE DELIVERANCE OF EHUD.

Chapter iii. 12-30.

After Othniel's death "the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord," and for this He "strengthened Eglon the King of Moab against" them. This king joined forces with the children of Ammon and Amalek, and crossing the Jordan, invaded the land and captured Jericho, "the city of palm-trees." For eighteen years they had to serve this oppressor, and then a second time "they cried unto the Lord" in their distress, and He heard them. This time it was Ehud, the son of Gera, a Benjamite, who was raised up to be a saviour. Like many of his tribe in former and in after days, this man was left-handed. Apparently a prominent man among his people, he was sent to Eglon with a present or an instalment of tribute. Deliberately and craftily Ehud prepares himself for his daring act of deliverance. He "made him" a two-edged sword eighteen inches long, which he girds under his raiment upon his right thigh. He knows his left-handedness will stand him in good stead, by way of throwing the victim of his vengeance off his guard.

When the deputation arrived with Ehud at its head, the king, whose fatness may have made him indolent and slow of motion, and thus an easier prey, was seated, surrounded by his court, in his summer parlour, for coolness' sake. Ehud and his company, bearing the present, are ushered in. Ehud offers it in due form, and the ceremony at an end, quits the presence, and departs a little distance with the rest of his retinue. Then when they reach the quarries (or graven images) that were by Gilgal, he suddenly turns back, and again presents himself before the king. "I have a secret errand unto thee, O king," he says. The unsuspecting king, hoping perhaps for important information about the doings of the Israelites, bids his courtiers withdraw, and there he is left alone with Ehud. "I have a message from God unto thee," Ehud repeats. Struck perhaps by his earnestness of look and word, Eglon rises from the throne; but as he does so, "Ehud put forth his left hand, and took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly." So determined was the blow that the weapon passed right through the poor helpless body, and "came out behind." Still calm and self-possessed, the avenger

passes noiselessly into the verandah, shuts and locks the door of the death-chamber behind him, and makes good his escape. When the servants came back, on finding the doors shut and fastened, they concluded that the king wished to be left in quiet, and in vain "they tarried till they were ashamed." Then at last they turned the key and ventured in; and behold, to their dismay, "their lord was fallen down dead on the earth." But while they tarried Ehud had escaped safe away to the thick woods of Seirah in the hill country of Ephraim. Without delay he blew the trumpet and assembled an army, which, informed of his exploit, and relying on him to lead them, went down and seized the fords of Jordan against the kingless and retreating Moabites. Not a man did they suffer to pass over; about ten thousand warriors were slain that day; the power of Moab was crushed; "and the land had rest four score years."

As with Othniel, so with Ehud, it is difficult to say whether his deliverance and judgeship extended further afield than over the tribes of Benjamin and Ephraim. The same expression is used in introducing the story of Deborah (chap. iv. 1), as we commented on in chap. iii. 12 (The Judgeship of Othniel, p. 12)

12. **Eglon** (calf). **Moab**, to the south-east of the Dead Sea.

13. **City of palm-trees**, *i.e.*, Jericho; see i. 16.

15. **Ehud** (powerful): another Benjamite with the same name is mentioned in 1 Chron. viii. 6.

Left-handed. Seven hundred such Benjamites are mentioned in xx. 16. In 1 Chron. xii. 2 the men of this tribe are described as practised in the use of either hand.

A present—that is, probably, an instalment of tribute.

16. **A cubit** = $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet.

19. **The quarries**; margin, **graven images** (*sc.* idols).

This **Gilgal** is near Jericho and the Jordan; also called Geli-loth (Josh. xv. 7 and xviii. 17).

20. **Summer parlour**. "Every respectable dwelling," says Dr. Thomson, "has both winter and summer house. If these are on the same storey, then the external and airy apartment is the summer *house*, and that for winter is the interior and more sheltered room" ("Land and the Book," p. 309). *Cf.* Amos iii. 15 and Jer. xxxvi. 22.

22. (1) A.V., **the dirt came out**; (2) margin, **it** (? the dagger) **came out at the fundament**; (3) R.V., **it came out**

behind ; (4) margin, he (*sc.* Ehud) went out into the ante-chamber. An obscure passage. The first three versions simply describe the force of the blow. The last seems to presuppose an inner chamber in which Eglon was sitting when he was slain, an outer chamber, then apparently the doors and a porch (or verandah) outside again, communicating perhaps with an outside staircase, by which Ehud escaped (*cf.* S. Matt. xxiv. 17).

26. **Seirath** or **Seirah** = shaggy (*sc.* thickly-wooded).

28. **The fords of Jordan.** *Cf.* Josh. ii. 7 and Judges xii. 5. A.V., toward Moab ; R.V., against the Moabites.

THE DELIVERANCE OF SHAMGAR.

Chapter iii. 31.

After Ehud, we are told in one brief sentence, came Shamgar the son of Anath, who relieved the south-western district of Palestine from the oppressions of the Philistines. The only fact recorded of him is that at one time and another he "smote of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox-goad." Though at the beginning of the story of Deborah and Barak (iv. 1), Ehud's death is made an epoch, yet in their song of triumph (v. 6) it is "the days of Shamgar" that are referred to ; whence it would seem that the days of Ehud were in some measure contemporary with those of Shamgar.

Notes on the Text.

31. **Shamgar** (? flight or pursuer). *Cf.* v. 6.

Son of Anath. A place called Beth-anath is mentioned in i. 33 as belonging to the tribe of Naphtali ; hence Shamgar may have been of that tribe.

Slew six hundred—not necessarily all at the same time—with an **ox-goad**. We know from 1 Sam. xiii. 19-22 that implements of war were forbidden to the Israelites by the Philistines in the days of Saul. An ox-goad is described as an instrument ten feet long, with a spike at one end and a sharp chisel at the other.

THE DELIVERANCE OF DEBORAH AND BARAK.

Chapters iv. and v.

The next oppression under which the children of Israel were brought "for again doing that which was evil in the sight of

the Lord," was that of "Jabin, King of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor," into whose hand "the Lord sold them." The captain of his armies, the most formidable portion of which consisted of nine hundred iron chariots, was "Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles." The middle tribes seem to have been more particularly affected by this tyranny, which lasted for twenty long years. At last they "cried unto the Lord," and this time it was a woman who was raised up as the Divine instrument of deliverance, one "Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth." What peculiar circumstances may have brought her into a position of such unusual influence for a woman we cannot say, but she is described as sitting to administer justice "under the palm-tree of Deborah," which was no doubt a well-known landmark and rendezvous "between Ramah and Beth-el in the hill country of Ephraim." After the twenty weary years of bondage she braced herself up and determined to liberate her people. With unerring sagacity she selects her agent and sends for "Barak the son of Abinoam out of Kedesh-naphtali." To him she communicates her plan, which she feels is the Lord's command upon her. He is to gather together ten thousand men from Naphtali and Zebulun, and muster them on Mount Tabor, and into the valley of Kishon below would the Lord draw Sisera and his host and deliver them into Barak's hand. So extraordinary was the personal influence of this commanding woman that Barak's one condition before undertaking this enterprise is that Deborah herself should go with him. To this she consents. "Nevertheless," she adds, "the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." The prophecy, as the sequel shows, was terribly fulfilled. Meanwhile Deborah, true to her word, went back with Barak to Kedesh. Having succeeded in collecting the required ten thousand, and still fortified by Deborah's presence and counsel, Barak drew up his army on the rounded eminence of Tabor. News of this rising did not, of course, fail to reach Sisera. With all promptitude he too assembles his host, "even" the much dreaded "nine hundred chariots of iron and all the people that were with him," and marches into the Kishon valley, sternly determined to quell the rebels, and calmly confident of the result. In the host of Israel it is still Deborah who gives the word to Barak at the proper moment: the wisdom of occupying

a lofty but not precipitous hill like Tabor in waiting to attack an army whose main strength lay in heavy chariots is obvious. "Up," she says to her obedient general, "for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand : is not the Lord gone out before thee?" It was the winter season, when the ground would be additionally heavy for chariot-wheels ; and further, she had taken advantage of a wild tempestuous day, when the heavens and the elements themselves should aid her vengeance. The pelting rain and hail came down in torrents, and rapidly flooded the river courses. Down the slopes of Tabor went Barak and his brave ten thousand, and found the enemy at Taanach by the water of Megiddo. In the pitched battle that ensued "the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak." They turned and fled northwards and homewards : many, we are led to suppose, were swallowed up as they crossed the swollen streams, and the rest were pursued by the victors right back to Harosheth : "All the host of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword : there was not a man left."

Meanwhile Sisera himself is overtaken by the vengeance which Deborah had predicted. When the rout began, he "lighted down from his chariot and fled away on his feet." Taking a different course to the rest of his army, he came in his flight to the tent of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite. Heber had separated himself from the rest of the Kenites, who frequented the desert of Judah, and ordinarily dwelt up in the highlands of the north under an oak, which is by Kedesh. The severity of the winter season seems to have brought him down at this time to the less exposed plain of Esdraelon, where he was careful to live at peace with Jabin, the present master of the country. To the tent then of this man's wife came Sisera, weary and crestfallen, but confident of security in this retreat, and at least so far as Jael was concerned. All her actions, indeed, were such as to increase his confidence. She "went out to meet" him, and invited him with all cordiality into the tent : "Turn in, my lord, turn in to me : fear not," she said. And when he came in and lay down, she covered him with a warm rug ; and at his request for a little water to quench his thirst, she gave him rich, creamy milk instead ; and then, again at his request she stationed herself at the tent door to turn aside questioners and

prevent their entrance. Very soon her careful attentions had the desired effect, and the tired warrior fell into a deep sleep. Perhaps till then she had been prompted purely by a woman's sympathy with distress and misfortune : perhaps it was not until now, when she saw the man lying there wholly in her power, that the greatness of the opportunity seized her mind, and forgetting the claims of the individual upon her fidelity, she determined to strike for the freedom of the oppressed nation with whom her tribe had from of old been connected. Whatever may have been her motives or impulses, what she did is well known. She "took a tent pin and a hammer in her hand, and went softly unto him, and smote the pin into his temples." So true and deadly was the blow that the pin "pierced through into the ground," and instant death was caused. In his pursuit Barak came to the tent. Jael went out to meet him and said, "Come, and I will show thee the man whom thou seekest ;" and when he entered, "Behold, Sisera lay dead, and the tent pin was in his temples." In this terrible way was Deborah's prophecy fulfilled ; and the effect of the great victory that she and Barak had won was that Jabin's power was broken, and "the hand of the children of Israel prevailed more and more against" him, "until they had destroyed" him ; and "the land had rest forty years."

The Song of Victory

which follows this narrative and forms chap. v. is for every reason of the highest interest. There can hardly be any doubt of its complete genuineness ; and that being so, it is an extremely ancient example of the sublimity to which Hebrew poetry could and so often did rise. The date and circumstances of its composition being considered, its language and its sentiments are of a very high order. Vers. 3, 7, and 12 seem to point to Deborah herself as the composer of the triumphal ode which she and Barak together sang in commemoration of their joint victory. (i.) The poem begins with an exhortation to praise the Lord for the courageous way in which the people, leaders and led, had risen to the occasion (ver. 2). Then (ii.) (vers. 3-11) the kings of the earth are summoned to bear witness to the glorious vindication of the Lord's Majesty, which has just been accomplished on them, and reference is made (*a*) to the awful circumstances

which attended the first exaltation of the Israelites as a nation under Mount Sinai ; (b) to their recent degradation and decline into idolatry ; (c) to the joyful restoration which Deborah had been enabled to bring about. Next after a renewed call to the singing of praise (ver. 12) comes (iii.) (vers. 13-18) an enumeration of the tribes that assisted and of those that held aloof ; followed by (iv.) (vers. 19-23) a description of the incidents of the battle itself ; the disappointment of the Canaanitish princes, the aid rendered by the elements, the storm and the overflowing Kishon, the stampede and rout of horses and chariots that ensued, the accursed apathy of Meroz, whose inhabitants refused to join in the pursuit. Further on (v.) (vers. 24-27) the terrible fate that overtook Sisera at the hand of Jael is most vividly portrayed ; and again (vi.) (vers. 28-30) we have a scornful account of Sisera's mother awaiting in vain her son's return laden with rich spoil ; and lastly (vii.) (ver. 31) the prayer is uttered that such may be the fate of all Jehovah's enemies, whilst those who love Him go forth conquering and to conquer.

The Morality of Jael's Act.

This has often been discussed. It must be freely acknowledged that, whatever her motives may have been and whenever formed, whether deliberately beforehand or on a sudden impulse when her victim was asleep, she violated the sacred duties of hospitality, she lied, she was guilty of treachery and assassination ; and all these things are abominable in God's eyes. We may not say then that she was inspired by God to commit this crime, and it is to be noticed that Deborah in the song does not speak of it as a Divine act. And yet it is part of the inscrutable mystery of Providence that wicked agents and unrighteous acts so often take their share in the bringing about of beneficial results : so it was with Jael ; unjustified as she herself was in doing what she did, God had doubtless so ordered it, and we can never hope to understand the why and the wherefore of these things. Lastly, it must not be forgotten that these narratives of very ancient history, which the Bible furnishes, teach us as often by warning us away from as by inciting us into the imitation of them. This of course is of universal application, and not confined to Jael or the rest of the Book of Judges.

Notes on the Text.

iv. 2. **Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor.** A king of the same name and district mentioned in Josh. xi. Hazor, the city, Joshua had burnt. It was in Naphtali. Solomon repaired it (1 Kings ix. 15). Tiglath-pileser captured it (2 Kings xv. 29).

Harosheth of the Gentiles (or nations), said to be so called either because of the mixed races that inhabited it or because it was one of those strongholds which the Israelites were unable to take. It is supposed by some to have been on the river Kishon, by others on the west side of the Lake Merom.

3. **Nine hundred chariots of iron.** The number of the chariots and their terrifying effect is alluded to also in Josh. xi. 4.

4. **Debōrah** ("bee," or perhaps "leader").

5. **Dwelt**; margin of R.V., **sat** (*sc.* for judgment).

The palm tree of Deborah. Deborah, Rachel's nurse, was buried below Bethel, under an oak (Gen. xxxv. 8). The same person may also have given her name to this palm tree, which was in the same neighbourhood.

6. **Barak** (lightning). The same name is found at Carthage in later days in the powerful family of *Barca*, to which Hannibal belonged.

Kedesh-naphtali. The city of refuge for the north, so called to distinguish it from Kadesh-barnea in the south.

Draw. Here intransitive = march in order. In ver. 7, transitive = cause to march.

Mount Tabor. A remarkable isolated, well-wooded, conical mountain, overlooking the plain of Esdraelon, 1300 feet high, and about six or eight miles due east of Nazareth. Probably not to be identified with the mount of Transfiguration (S. Matt. xvii. 1-13, &c.), if only on account of the buildings upon it.

7. **The river Kishon.** One of the principal feeders of this river from the north-east rises in Mount Tabor. The river itself in its main course runs through the plain of Esdraelon (or Jezreel), and flows into the sea to the north of Mount Carmel.

11. A.V., **father-in-law**; R.V., **brother-in-law**. In Exod. xviii. 2, Moses' father-in-law is called *Jethro*, not *Hobab*; and

in Exod. ii. 18, *Reuel* (cf. iii. 1, &c.); in Num. x. 29 *Hobab* is called the son of *Raguel*. Hence the probability is that *Jethro*, *Reuel*, and *Raguel* are different names for the same person, viz., Moses' father-in-law, and that *Hobab* was this person's son. So also Josephus seems to imply.

The Kenites ; Heb. **Kain** (cf. Numb. xxiv. 22).

A.V., unto the plain of **Zaanaim** ; R.V., as far as the oak (or **terebinth**, margin), in **Zaanannim**. Cf. Josh. xix. 33, R.V. The name seems to mean "nomads" or "rovers."

Kedesh. As this is in Naphtali, some forty miles away from the scene of the battle, it has been supposed that the winter season had drawn Heber down from those hilly parts to the less exposed plain of Esdraelon.

16. A.V., upon the edge of the sword ; R.V., by the edge, &c.

18. A.V., mantle ; margin and R.V., rug.

19. **Opened a bottle of milk**, i.e., unfastened the neck of the goat-skin vessel, such as is still used in the East and other countries to carry liquids in.

21. A.V., **nail** ; R.V., **tent pin**. Made of hard wood and painted. **Hammer**, that is, a **mallet**.

The Song of Deborah and Barak.

v. 2. A.V., for the avenging of Israel ; R.V., for that the leaders took the lead in Israel.

3. **Kings, princes**, viz., of the heathen.

Sing. The word used implies instrumental accompaniment.

4. The reference, of course, is to the giving of the law by Moses (Exod. xix.). Moses himself commences his blessing (Deut. xxxiii.) with much the same language. **Out of Seir, out of the fields of Edom**, i.e., like a mighty storm-cloud arising from the east and gathering on Mount Sinai to meet the Israelites as they advanced from the west.

6. **Jael** ("exalted," or perhaps "wild goat"). Probably not the wife of Heber, but some male champion of Israel otherwise unknown to us.

The highways were unoccupied. The proper significance of this is well given by the R.V. margin, **the caravans ceased**.

7. A.V., (**The inhabitants of**) **the villages ceased** ; R.V.,

the rulers ceased ; but margin, *or*, the villages were unoccupied.

8. The meaning of this verse seems to be—"Israel fell into idolatry, for which they were punished by war coming to their very gates ; and yet none of the forty thousand fighting men of the nation brought out their arms." Thus **seen** = brought out and used. **Forty thousand**—a poetical round number, but *cf.* Josh. iv. 13.

10. Those who **ride on white asses** and **sit on rich carpets** are the wealthy and prosperous ; those that **walk by the way** are the poor, who have to go on foot : all classes joined at last in driving the enemy from the gates. **White asses** : strictly, these would be only white spotted. White has often been a sacred colour in animals among various nations. **Sit on rich carpets**, R.V., is the literal and correct version. A.V. has **sit in judgment**.

11. A.V., (**They that are delivered**) **from the noise of archers** ; R.V. simply **far from** ; margin, **because of the voice of the archers**. Keil and Delitzsch explain this obscure verse thus :—"The whole nation had good reason to make this reflection, as the warriors, having returned home, were now relating the mighty acts of the Lord among the women, who were watering their flocks, and the people had returned to their towns once more."

12. **Lead thy captivity captive**. *Cf.* Ps. lxxviii. 18. Of course the meaning both here and there is simply "lead the captives away."

13. A.V., **then he made him that remaineth have dominion over the nobles among the people : the Lord made me have dominion over the mighty** ; R.V., **then came down a remnant of the nobles and the people : the Lord came down for me against the mighty** ; but in the margin another version nearly the same as A.V. is given ; and again a third version (based on a different reading ?) of the latter part of the verse, *q.v.* For the Lord's own presence with the army, *cf.* Josh. v. 13-15.

14. A.V., **a root of them against Amalek** ; R.V., **they, whose root is in Amalek**, *i.e.*, the bravest of the tribe of Ephraim, who had been able to take root and settle in that part of the territory which the Amalekites had previously possessed

(cf. xii. 15). **Machir** (the only son of Manasseh) probably stands for the western portion of that tribe. **A.V., the pen of the writer; R.V., the marshal's staff; margin, or, the staff of the scribe.** Writer or numberer was the technical name given to the musterer-general, whose duty it was to levy and muster the troops (2 Kings xxv. 19; cf. 2 Chron. xxvi. 11). Here it denotes the military leader generally.*

15. **A.V., he was sent on foot into the valley; R.V., into the valley they rushed forth at his feet.** "The valley" is that part of the Kishon in which the battle took place. The **A.V., "on foot"** (*i.e.*, as fast as his feet would carry him) seems more correct than the **R.V.** **A.V., for the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart,** should be as **R.V., at the watercourses of Reuben there were great resolves of heart,** *i.e.*, the Reubenites made fine resolutions to help, but failed, through faintheartedness, to carry them out. Perhaps they were afraid to leave their flocks, &c., unprotected. "The territory of Reuben, which was celebrated for its splendid pastures, must have abounded in brooks" (Keil and Delitzsch).

17. **Gilead** (grandson of Manasseh) stands for the half-tribe of Manasseh and Gad, who alone occupied the east side of Jordan. **Dan**, their territory, included the port of Joppa (see Josh. xix. 46). *N.B.*—For some unknown reason the tribes of Judah and Simeon are not mentioned at all. Perhaps they were too much engaged in fighting the Philistines.

19. **The kings** (*sc.* Jabin and his allies). **Taanach** is in the southern part of the plain of Esdraelon. **Waters of Megiddo** = the Kishon. **They took no gain of money,** *i.e.*, they failed to get any spoil, as they expected.

20. **They** (= the stars in their courses) **fought from heaven.** This is taken (by Josephus and others) to mean that a terrible storm of hail and thunder helped to decide the day, driving in the enemies' faces and flooding their camp.

21. **A.V., thou hast trodden down strength; so R.V. in margin, but in text, march on in strength.** "Borne away by the might of the acts to be commemorated, Deborah stimulates her soul, *i.e.*, herself, to a vigorous continuation of her song" (Keil and Delitzsch).

* Professor Sayce, however (Higher Criticism, pp. 56-59), defends the rendering of **A.V.**

22. A.V., **broken** ; R.V., **stamp**, *i.e.*, the war-chariots of the enemy galloped away at full speed.

23. **Meroz**. Some place not identified with any certainty, whose inhabitants appear to have refused their aid in the pursuit. **Against or among the mighty** (*cf.* ver. 13).

24. The courageous conduct of Jael, though not an Israelite, is contrasted with the supineness or cowardice of Meroz. **Women in the tent** = shepherdesses or Arab women.

25. **Butter**. Probably cream or the best milk.

26. A.V., **smote off his head** ; R.V., more accurately, **smote through**.

28. **Through the lattice**, *viz.*, through the lattice-work shutters that filled the upstairs window instead of glass casements. Such are still quite common in the East.

29. **Her wise ladies**, *viz.*, the wisest among her waiting-women. "The irony is very obvious, as the reality put all their wise conjectures to shame" (Keil and Delitzsch).

A.V., **Yea, she returned answer to herself** ; the R.V. margin is more probable (**Yet she repeateth her words unto herself**), *i.e.*, her attendants' reason for the delay did not satisfy her ; she continued repeating her question to herself.

30. This is the wise ladies' account of the matter. The latter part of the verse is obscure, and the Hebrew text may be corrupt, but the R.V., **on the necks of the spoil**, is more likely, if less intelligible than the A.V., **meet for the necks of them that take the spoil**.

31. **So**, *viz.*, as Sisera and the whole host, not as Sisera only. "The rising of the sun in its strength is a striking image of the exaltation of Israel to a more and more glorious unfolding of its destiny, which Deborah anticipated as the result of this victory" (Keil and Delitzsch).

THE DELIVERANCE OF GIDEON.

Chapters vi.-viii.

Again the Israelites lapsed into wicked doing, and Jehovah delivered them over to the Midianites and their allies for seven years. So disastrous were the inroads of these nomad hordes, who came from the east of Jordan in dense swarms, with their

camels and their tents, destroying or consuming all the crops year by year as far as Gaza in the south-west, that the Israelites were fain to hide themselves and their possessions in the deep ravines and fastnesses of the mountains, and in those caves, whether natural or artificial, which are still to be observed in certain parts of Palestine. The distressed people cried unto the Lord, and He sent a prophet to remind them how the Lord had brought them out of Egypt, and had helped them in driving out the nations from the land of Canaan, and how He had proclaimed Himself their God, and forbidden them "to fear the gods of the Amorites," in whose land they dwelt, but they had disobeyed His voice.

After this preliminary reproof and reminder to the nation, the Lord proceeded to raise up a deliverer in Gideon by special revelations and signs. Gideon's father, Joash, was apparently the head of the family of Abiezer, one of the poorest in the tribe of Manasseh. Gideon was "the least of his father's house," as he himself pleads, *i.e.*, probably the youngest and the sole survivor, his brethren by the same mother having been treacherously slain at Tabor by Zebah and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian. The home of the family was at Ophrah of the Abiezrites, and there, under an oak (or terebinth) tree, while Gideon was beating out corn with a stick secretly in the winepress, to conceal it from the Midianites, "the angel of the Lord" presented himself in the form of a traveller with a staff in his hand. Seating himself near the unconscious labourer, he said, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." Without recognising his Visitor or noticing the emphasis laid upon his own valour, Gideon only asks in complaining surprise, "Ah, sir, if the Lord be with us (as you say), why are we in these straits? Where are all His former works on our behalf? Why has He cast us off?" At this the Visitor, Who is now called Jehovah Himself, turns and fixes His gaze upon Gideon, and says with complete directness, "Go in this thy might and save Israel from the hand of Midian: have not I sent thee?" Thereupon Gideon perceives with Whom he is speaking, and at once changes his tone to humble reverence: "Oh Lord, how can a weak man like myself save Israel?" "Surely I will be with thee," is Jehovah's reply, "and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." Still afraid of his own powers, Gideon asks for a sign of assurance that his mission

is really from Jehovah Himself : he begs leave to bring forth his present and lay it before Him ; and upon Jehovah promising to tarry until his return, he goes in, and having prepared the best food that he could find for so honoured a Guest, a kid, which he put in a basket, unleavened bread, and some broth in a pot, he "brought it out unto him under the oak and presented it." Once more it is the angel of God (not Jehovah Himself) who is said to speak. "Take the flesh," is his command, "and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth." When Gideon had done so, "the angel of the Lord put forth the end of his staff that was in his hand, and touched the" food ; "and there went up fire out of the rock and consumed" it ; and immediately the Divine Visitor "departed out of his sight." No doubt now remaining in Gideon's mind that it was indeed the angel of the Lord whom he had seen, he is at first greatly dismayed, and fears he must die in consequence ; but being again reassured by an intimation from Jehovah, he built an altar on the consecrated spot with the title Jehovah-shalom (the Lord is peace), and it was still standing when this record was written.

The very night after the preceding vision, Gideon received further instructions from Jehovah. He was to throw down his father's altar to Baal, and having cut up the wooden idol that was upon it for fuel, and having built another altar unto the Lord his God, he was to take the second bullock of his father's herd in age, being seven years old, and sacrifice it. With ten of his father's servants, under cover of night, Gideon did as he was commanded. When the inhabitants of Ophrah discovered the wrecked altar and idol and the remains of the sacrifice early next morning, they made inquiry and brought home the deed to Gideon ; then they demanded that Joash should bring out his son to death. But Joash, whose conscience seems to have been aroused, stoutly defended his son, scornfully proposing that Baal should be allowed to avenge his own cause first, and then by to-morrow morning, if he have failed to do so, so far from Gideon being slain, all Baal's supporters would merit death. From that day forth Gideon was known by the appellation Jerub-baal (let Baal plead), apparently at his father's own suggestion.

When subsequently the Midianites and their allies assembled and crossed the Jordan for an invasion of the fertile valley of

Jezreel,' which the Kishon and its tributaries water, "the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon," who had been already so marvellously prepared, and incited him to action. At the sound of his trumpet, when his own family of Abiezer had mustered, messengers were sent to summon first Manasseh, and then the neighbouring tribes of Asher, Zebulon, and Naphtali. The army thus gathered advanced to meet the enemy. But even yet Gideon makes trial of the Lord's long-suffering, and demands further signs of His Presence with him. If God would indeed save Israel by his hand, as He had spoken, a fleece that he would lay upon the threshing-floor should be wet with dew, while all the ground around was dry. This sign was most evidently fulfilled : early in the morning, when he pressed the fleece, a bowlful of dew was wrung out. Still unsatisfied, because wool has a natural attraction for moisture, he deprecates God's anger if he makes one more request : this time the fleece is to be dry when all the ground is wet with dew. This undoubted miracle God also vouchsafes to perform, and at last Gideon is ready to march out to victory.

The Israelite camp was to the south of the valley of Jezreel, on rising ground out of which rose the spring of Harod (trembling), while the Midianite host was spread along the valley to their north by the hill of Moreh—32,000 of Israel against 135,000 of Midian. But disproportionate even thus as the numbers seemed, Gideon's army was to be still further sifted and reduced by two successive tests, in order that Israel might have no ground for self-boasting, and the victory might be all Jehovah's. Proclamation was first made that whosoever was "fearful and trembling" should evade the enemy and go home : 22,000 availed themselves of this permission, and the number was reduced to 10,000. But these were yet too many. Gideon is bidden by the Lord to bring down the army from their position as if to march against the foe, and as they crossed the bright, cool streams of Harod, a still further test of fitness would be made. Three hundred alone were found of sufficient self-restraint and eagerness for the battle to do no more than sip so much of the water as their hands could carry to their mouths in crossing and march straight on : "all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink" the "water." With this brave handful would the Lord save the nation ; the others were to give up to the three hundred the provi-

sions they had brought, and as many trumpets as they had among them, and return home. The night after this had happened, the Lord told Gideon that now his opportunity for attack had come, but that, if he was afraid, he and his servant Purah should go down to the enemy's camp and reconnoitre. This the two did, and when they came to the outskirts they overheard one man telling his dream to another. He had seen a cake of barley bread, he said, come tumbling into the camp and falling against their own tent with such force that it was entirely upset. "This is nothing else," replied his fellow, "save the sword of Gideon the son of Joash, a man of Israel : into his hand God hath delivered Midian and all the host." Struck by the Divine intimation, Gideon worshipped the Lord, and immediately returned to carry out his plan of a night surprise. The three hundred are divided into three equal companies, and each man is armed with a trumpet and a lighted torch within a food-pitcher. Thus equipped, they start, and when they reached the camp at three different points it was now midnight, and the watch was but newly set, which would of itself cause some slight confusion. Straightway in accordance with the strict orders they had received, Gideon gave the signal, and they broke their pitchers, brandished the blazing torches in their left hands, and holding their trumpets in their right, shouted as their war-cry, "The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon," and then blew with their trumpets as they stood all round the camp. Terror-struck and bewildered, many still half asleep, the Midianites were thrown into a complete panic. They ran about and cried out in dismay, and turned their swords against one another, and finally took to flight in the south-easterly direction over the mountains towards and across the Jordan.

Thereupon the rest of Gideon's host, who had been disbanded, were quickly gathered together again and joined in the pursuit ; and in order to cut off all retreat, special messengers were sent throughout the hill district of Ephraim, bidding the members of that tribe take possession of the fords of Jordan, and also of the various other water-courses on the west of Jordan, which the Midianites would cross in their flight. This they did with such good effect as to very materially assist in the defeat of Midian. Two of their minor chieftains, Oreb and Zeeb, they slew, the one at a rock, the other at a wine-press, which were afterwards known as Oreb and Zeeb respectively in commemoration of the victory.

Meanwhile "faint, yet pursuing," Gideon and his three hundred had crossed the river; but they received little if any assistance from those who dwelt on the other side. Two towns, Succoth and Penuel, are specified as having refused to give them food, their leading men scornfully remarking that they had not yet got the Midianite kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, in their power, so as to warrant them in giving. Naturally incensed at this, Gideon vowed terrible vengeance on these places when the Lord *had* delivered Zebah and Zalmunna into his hand.

It was probably about this time, when Gideon was preparing to penetrate still further east "by the way of them that dwelt in tents on the east of Nobah and Jogbehah" towards Karkor, where the Midianites were encamped, that the rest of the Israelite host came up to join Gideon, and among them the men of Ephraim, bringing the heads of Oreb and Zeeb. Gideon's powers as a leader of men were at this point severely tested: the men of Ephraim "did chide with him sharply" for not having included them in the first summons to the war with Midian. Gideon's soft answer, by which he effectually turned away their wrath, is famous, "What have I done in comparison of you? is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?" So with harmony once more restored, the Israelites came down upon the hosts of Midian at Karkor, and again took them off their guard. In the flight that ensued the two kings were captured, and all the host was discomfited. With his two royal prisoners Gideon then returned, and as he was approaching Succoth by "the ascent of Heres," he "caught a young man" of Succoth, from whom he obtained a list of the seventy-seven princes and elders of that place. On reaching Succoth he showed the inhabitants Zebah and Zalmunna, with whom they had taunted him, and proceeded to "teach" them their folly by inflicting the punishment he had vowed upon their elders with scourges of briars and thorns of the wilderness. So also on reaching Penuel, "he brake down the tower" and "slew the men of the city." The grim purpose for which he had kept Zebah and Zalmunna alive being now accomplished, they too must die to avenge his brethren's cruel death, which has been already mentioned (p. 25). Out of their mouth they are condemned. "What manner of men were they whom ye slew at Tabor?" he asks in a formal inquiry. "As thou art, so were they," is their

fawning answer ; "each one resembled the children of a king." "They were my brethren, the sons of my mother," Gideon sternly replies ; "as the Lord liveth, if ye had saved them alive I would not slay you." To increase the disgrace of their death, he bids Jether, his eldest but still youthful son, to slay them ; but Jether could not bring himself to attempt it, "for he was but a youth." "Slay us thyself," is the king's request ; "treat us like men even in destroying us." Then Gideon "arose and slew" them, and "took the crescents that were on their camels' necks" as spoil.

So greatly impressed were those Israelites who had joined in this campaign with Gideon's powers, that they proposed to make him and his descendants their hereditary rulers ; but Gideon would not hear of it. "The Lord (Jehovah) shall rule over you." Yet clear as he is on the supremacy of Jehovah being the only rightful one, he makes a request for a purpose which was afterwards held to have done harm to the purity and the unity of His worship. He asks for all the gold earrings and other ornaments with which the Midianites (like all Arabs) were fond of adorning themselves and their camels. With these and with "the purple raiment that was on the kings of Midian" he had an ephod made, which he kept for religious not idolatrous purposes at Ophrah, thus drawing away "all Israel" from the ark at Shiloh, the only true seat of worship, to the altar he had built at God's command at home. In the main, however, Gideon had effected Jehovah's purpose in raising him up. Midian was completely subdued, and for forty years the land had peace. In accordance with his already expressed determination not to be a ruler, Gideon seems to have retired into more complete seclusion at home after his mighty exploits than many of the other judges. This is indeed in keeping with his whole character as we read it in the sacred record, a character which had required so many direct proofs of the Divine Mission from the very first to incite him into action. He "dwelt in his own house," and by his many wives reared a family of "seventy sons of his body begotten,"* besides Abimelech, a son by "his concubine that was in Shechem." At last, "in a good old age," Gideon Jerubbaal

* In spite of the emphatic phrase, one is tempted to consider seventy a round number, and inclusive at least of his grandsons, if not of his daughters and granddaughters also.

died, and was buried in his father's sepulchre at Ophrah, but his benefactions to the nation, and the Lord's deliverance of them by his hand, were soon forgotten. They returned to the god whom Gideon had overthrown, making Baal their covenant-god (Baal-berith) instead of Jehovah.

Notes on the Text.

vi. 1. **Midian**, the descendants of Abraham by his wife Keturah (Gen. xxv. 2), occupied the grassy plains to the east of Moab. Two hundred years before they had been defeated by Israel under Moses (Numb. xxxi.), but by now had recovered their strength.

2. *The dens*, &c. The article marks that these hiding-places were well known at the time when the Book of Judges was written, as indeed they are still to be traced in certain parts of Palestine. Cf. Heb. xi. 38.

3. **Children of the East**. The general name for the tribes that lived in the desert on the east of Palestine (Keil and Delitzsch).

4. **Gaza**. In the extreme south-west.

5. A.V., as **grasshoppers**; R.V., as **locusts**. The dense black clouds of locusts, and their devastating effect, have been often described by travellers in the East.

8-10. Cf. chap. ii. 1-5.

10. **Amorites**. Here put for the Canaanites generally.

11. **Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abi-ezrite** (cf. ver. 24). The town is so called to distinguish it from Ophrah in Benjamin (Josh. xviii. 23); but its position is not identified. According to Josh. xvii. 2, Abiezer was a family of Manasseh, of which Joash was probably the head at this time, and which ver. 15 tells us was the poorest in the tribe.

A.V., **threshed**; R.V., **was beating out**, sc. with a stick such as poorer people commonly used; the richer threshing with oxen, &c., on specially prepared floors. Joash, however, had a proper threshing-floor (see ver. 37); so it was fear that drove Gideon to use the wine-press. A.V., **by the wine-press**; R.V., **in the wine-press**, sc. in a hole that had been dug out of the ground or hewn out of the rock for that purpose.

12. **The angel of the Lord.** Cf. ii. 1, xiii. 3, &c.

13. **Oh, my lord** = Eng. "sir," as an ordinary form of address. Gideon did not recognise who his Visitor was.

14. **The Lord looked upon him**; R.V. margin, **turned towards him.** N.B.—Jehovah Himself now, not His angel as before, is described as present and sending Gideon on his mission.

15. **Oh Lord** (sc. God). The form of address is now slightly altered, and implies that Gideon has recognised his Divine Visitor.

Family, literally **thousand**. See Exod. xviii. 25, Numb. i., and Mic. v. 2.

16. **As one man**, viz., at one blow.

17. A.V., **that thou talkest with me**; R.V. more clearly, **that it is thou that talkest with me.**

19. **An ephah**, about $22\frac{1}{2}$ lbs.

20. **This rock**, pointing to some rock close by which was to be used for the nonce as an altar.

21. **The (walking) staff.** The Visitor had come in the guise of an ordinary wayfarer.

Departed, sc. vanished suddenly.

22. **Saw that he was the angel of the Lord**, i.e., he was now quite assured of his Visitor's identity. A.V., **for because**; R.V., **for as much as.**

23. This reassuring message of peace came separately, and after the incident just recorded.

24. **Jehovah-shalom** = Jehovah (is) peace. **Unto this day**, sc. until the date of this book's composition (see pp. 2, 3).

25. **Thy father's young bullock, even (margin, and) the second bullock of seven years old**; R.V., omit **young**. Many think two animals are specified, one the young bullock of his father, the second a seven year old bullock; but in vers. 26-28 only "the second bullock" is mentioned, and therefore it seems more likely that only one animal is meant, viz., that bullock belonging to Joash, which, being seven years old, was second in age among the herd. The number seven was a sacred one, and may here typify the seven years that Midian had oppressed Israel (ver. 1).

A.V., **the grove**; R.V., **the Asherah**, i.e., the wooden symbol of the goddess of nature worshipped by the Canaanites. **By it**, rather with R.V. margin, **on it**; so also in ver. 28, &c.

26. A.V., **rock** ; R.V., **stronghold** (*sc.* of Ophrah).

A.V., **in the ordered place** ; rather with margin and R.V., **in the orderly manner**.

A.V., **with the wood of the grove** ; R.V., **with the wood of the Asherah**. So also in ver. 28, &c.

31. **Whilst it is yet morning**. The sense is rather with margin of R.V., (**let be**) **till morning**, *i.e.*, let us wait till to-morrow, that Baal may have time to avenge himself, and then all that espouse his cause shall be put to death.

32. **Jerubbaal** = let Baal plead. In 2 Sam. xi. 21 he is called Jerubbesheth, "besheth" being a contemptuous equivalent for Baal. *Cf.* Ishbosheth and Mephibosheth.

33. **Went over** (*sc.* the Jordan). **Valley of Jezreel** (or Es-draelon) is the broad valley of the Kishon waters.

34. **Came upon**, lit. "clothed," by a frequent Scriptural figure.

35. **All Manasseh**. Only the western portion.

They (*sc.* Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali from the north) **came up** (*sc.* advanced) **to meet them** (*sc.* Manasseh from the south).

37. A.V., **in the floor** ; R.V., **on the threshing-floor**.

37-40. The significance of Gideon's two experiments is this : a wet fleece on a dry ground is little remarkable, because wool naturally attracts whatever moisture there is ; but a dry fleece on a wet ground was all the more remarkable for the same reason. The latter, therefore, was a much more direct and strong proof of God's miraculous intervention in order to give Gideon confidence.

vii. 1. **Well** (R.V., **spring**) **of Harod** (*i.e.*, trembling, *cf.* ver. 3), and **hill of Moreh** (neither of these places are known), **in the valley** (*sc.* of Jezreel).

2. **Too many**, viz., 32,000 (ver. 3) against 135,000 (viii. 10), if the figures are correct.

3. A.V., **depart early** ; R.V., **depart** (margin, *or go round about*). The word is thought to imply "slink away through bypaths."

From Mount Gilead. Either a mistake for "Gilboa," or else another "Mount Gilead" in Western Palestine, far distant from the well-known "Mount Gilead" on the east of Jordan.

4. **Into the water** (*sc.* that flowed from the spring of Harod).

Try, *i.e.*, separate by a test (like a purifier of silver, and so on). The test used showed Gideon those who were least self-indulgent, and therefore most serviceable. Those who stayed to kneel down and get a full drink were distinguished from those who simply drank in passing just as much as their hands could bring to their mouths.

8. So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets. Much more satisfactory sense is yielded by adopting the version given in R.V. margin, **So they** (*sc.* the three hundred) **took the victuals of the people.**

Unto his tent, *i.e.*, not into camp, but home.

13. A cake of barley bread. This was the food of the poorer classes, and so a symbol of the despised Israelites, according to Keil and Delitzsch, who also see a peculiar significance in the tent (to an Arab the symbol of his power) being overthrown by a barley loaf (the food of the poorest among the tillers of the soil).

15. Worshipped (*sc.* Jehovah the Giver and Revealer of dreams).

16. Pitchers—the food vessels, no doubt. A.V., **lamps**; the margin and R.V. are right, **torches.**

18. The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. The words “the sword” are not in the text here, though they are in ver. 20. Similar stratagems are recorded in Greek, Roman, and modern Arab history.

19. In the beginning of the middle watch, *i.e.*, midnight. The Jews divided the night into only three watches until they adopted the Roman system of four.

21. A.V., all the host ran, and cried, and fled; R.V. (with doubtful correctness), **all the host ran, and they** (*sc.* the three hundred) **shouted and put them to flight.** The last verb seems rather to mean “carried off” (their possessions).

22. Beth-shittah (acacia house), **Zererah**, **Abel-meholah**, and **Tabbath** seem to be all places in the line of flight, but their situation are still very doubtful. The **border of Abel-meholah** seems rather to be “the strand (of the Jordan) named Abel-meholah.”

23. N.B.—Zebulun not mentioned here, as it was in vi. 35.

24. The waters (*sc.* all the streams in their course as well as Jordan).

Unto (R.V., as far as) **Beth-barah** (? the same as "Bethabara" * beyond Jordan, where John baptized," S. John i. 28).

Two princes (*sc.* minor chieftains of lower rank than the two kings Zebah and Zalmunna, *cf.* Ps. lxxxiii. 11).

Oreb=raven; **Zeeb**=wolf. Probably the two spots where these two were slain were afterwards known by their name. The sites are not identified.

viii. 1-3 give the sequel to what is related in vii. 24, 25, but do not fit in chronologically where they are placed, the complaint of Ephraim not being made till *after* Gideon had crossed Jordan.

2. **The gleanings of Ephraim**, viz., the decisive defeat which Ephraim had inflicted on Midian when Oreb and Zeeb were also slain (*cf.* Isa. x. 26).

The vintage of Abiezer. The previous putting to flight of Midian effected by Gideon and his three hundred.

4. The main thread of the narrative is here resumed.

5. **Succoth** (=booths). On the east side of the valley of Jordan, just to the north of the brook Jabbok (*cf.* Gen. xxxiii. 17).

8. **Penuel**. See Gen. xxxii. 24-32.

9. **In peace**, *i.e.*, having got peace by defeating the foe. **This tower**, probably the stronghold of Penuel, as in vi. 26.

10. **Karkor**. Situation not known.

11. **Them that dwell in tents**, viz., the nomad Arabs of the desert. **Nobah and Jogbehah**. Situation doubtful. Perhaps two ruins north-west of Rabbath-Ammon mark the spots. **Secure**, *i.e.*, off their guard.

13. A.V., **before the sun was up**; R.V., **from the ascent of Heres**. The place Heres is not known, but the A.V. can hardly be right.

14. **Described**; R.V. margin, *or wrote down*.

15. A.V., **upbraid**; R.V., **taunt**.

16. **Taught**, *i.e.*, punished; R.V. margin, Some ancient authorities read **threshed** (see ver. 7). **Men of Succoth** (*sc.* the seventy-seven princes and elders).

17. A.V., **beat down**; R.V., **brake down**. The tower of Penuel was rebuilt by Jeroboam (1 Kings xii. 25).

* "Bethabara" there, however, is said to be a very early correction for "Bethany" (an obscure village quite different from the better known Bethany of S. Matt. xxi. 17, &c.).

18. **At Tabor.** "This incident is not recorded elsewhere. The killing of Gideon's brothers had apparently been compassed not in open fight, but in a cruel and unrighteous manner" (Keil and Delitzsch). For Tabor, see iv. 6.

21. **As the man is, so is his strength,** *i.e.*, such a deed requires a man's strength, not a lad's.

A.V., **ornaments**; R.V., **crescents**, *i.e.*, as A.V. margin explains, crescent-shaped ornaments of precious metal; so ver. 26 and Isa. iii. 18. Such ornaments are still common in the East.

22. **The men of Israel.** Probably only those tribes who had joined in the recent campaign.

24. **Earrings**; R.V. margin, *or* **nose-rings**.

Ishmaelites includes the Midianites among the other Arab tribes (*cf.* Gen. xxxvii. 25).

25. **A garment.** Probably the large square piece of cloth which was used as the upper garment.

26. **One thousand seven hundred shekels of gold**=about 50 lbs. A.V., **collars**; R.V., **pendants**.

27. **An ephod.** Not an image of Jehovah or an idol, but an imitation of the high-priest's vestment described in Exod. xxviii. 6-12. **Put it in Ophrah**, *i.e.*, kept it for sacerdotal uses (? in connection with the altar that had been built, vi. 24) at Ophrah. The **snare** consisted in his usurping priestly functions, and drawing the people's worship away from the sanctuary at Shiloh, but not in actual idolatry (*cf.* vers. 33-35).

29. **Dwelt in his own house**, *i.e.*, in peaceful retirement.

31. **Whose name he called** (Heb. *set*) **Abimelech** (*i.e.*, king's father). The phrase implies that Abimelech was a surname, added not at birth, but later on in life.

33. **Baal-berith**, called El-Berith in ix. 46, R.V., "*i.e.*, Baal, with whom they had made a covenant, just as the Israelites had their faithful covenant God in Jehovah" (Keil and Delitzsch).

THE CAREER OF ABIMELECH.

Chapter ix.

Some time after Gideon's death, Abimelech, already mentioned as his son by a concubine whose home was in Shechem, went down there and approached his mother's family, especially

those on her father's side, who seem to have had considerable influence in the place.* He persuaded them to use their influence with the other citizens of the place, who were partly Canaanites and partly Israelites, in obtaining from them that acknowledgment of him as ruler which Gideon his father had definitely declined. Was it better, he argued, that "all the sons of Jerubbaal" (the destroyer of their god), "which are three score and ten persons," should rule over them; or that one man, himself, their kinsman, should do so. His arguments prevailed with "his mother's brethren," and they succeeded in winning over the rest of the Shechemites. Abimelech, therefore, was able, with a grant of seventy pieces of silver (about £7), that they made him from the treasury of the temple of Baal-berith, to hire a band of ruffians, with whom "he went into his father's house at Ophrah," and slew all his brethren but one, "on one stone" (*i.e.*, in one massacre); that one, the youngest, named Jotham, escaped by hiding himself. Thereupon, the way being made clear, the citizens of Shechem "and all the house of Millo" met together and solemnly made Abimelech king under the famous memorial oak at Shechem. But when the escaped Jotham heard of this, he went and stood on one of the lofty precipices of Mount Gerizim, which overhang Shechem on the south, from whence he uttered, in the ears of the citizens, the following fable, with its attendant application and curse:—"The trees," he said, "once desired to anoint a king for themselves. They approached the olive, the fig, and the vine in turn, but each of these refused to give up its own special duties and undertake the anxious office of king. The olive would not leave 'its fatness' wherewith both God and man are honoured; the fig would not leave its 'sweetness' and its 'good fruit'; nor the vine its 'wine, which cheereth God and man.' But what they would not undertake themselves, they were all willing to offer to the worthless bramble. So they all went and asked it to reign over them. To this the bramble consented on the ironical condition that if they anointed it king over them, they should bow their tall heads and put their trust in his shadow. If not, fire should come out from it and devour even the cedars of Lebanon, the noblest trees of the forest."

* By some they have been identified with the "house of Millo" (ver. 6), but there is no evidence for this. See notes.

This is the fable ; and then Jotham proceeds abruptly to its obvious application : "If ye have dealt truly and uprightly, and if ye have rewarded my father well for his great services by slaying his sons, and by making this Abimelech king, then rejoice ye in him, and let him also rejoice in you ; but if not, let fire come out from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem and the house of Millo, and let fire come out from them and devour Abimelech." Having uttered his curse, Jotham ran away to the south and fled to Beer, where he lived in hiding, and no more is heard of him.

But his prophecy of mutual destruction was strikingly fulfilled, as the sequel shows. When Abimelech had enjoyed his blood-won rule over Central Palestine for three years, "God sent an evil spirit between" him and his subjects, and they "dealt treacherously" with him. Apparently in his absence from the city, "they set liers-in-wait for him" on the lonely tops of Ebal and Gerizim, who brought discredit on his government by robbing "all that came along that way," and also, no doubt, hoped one day to get possession of their king himself. These ill practices were reported to Abimelech, but before he could take measures to repress them, matters grew still worse at Shechem. One Gaal, the son of Ebed, came to the city "with his brethren," a troop of banditti, and taking up his quarters there, soon established himself in the confidence of the citizens. At last, on the occasion of the annual vintage-feast, the rebellion reached a climax. As the merry-makers, having worked hard in the vineyards and the wine-press, were eating and drinking in Baal's temple, they took to cursing Abimelech. The voice of Gaal, heated with wine, was heard loud above the uproar, "Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem? Do not we Shechemites degrade ourselves by serving this upstart king, and Zebul, his underling? If you would recover your former dignity, serve rather the ancient princes of Canaanitish line of Hamor. Would to God this people were under my hand ! then would I remove Abimelech." Still louder and more boastful his voice is raised. Apostrophising Abimelech as if he were present, he shouts, "Increase thine army and come out." Acceptable as his sentiments were to a large number of the citizens, they were naturally most distasteful to Zebul, Abimelech's deputy in command. When these words were conveyed to him, his anger was kindled, and he sent secret

messengers to Abimelech with the news, and the following crafty counsel : " Up by night, thou and thy men, and lie in wait till the sun rises, and then, when Gaal and his band issue forth from the city, thou mayest do as thou shalt find occasion." Acting upon this advice, Abimelech brought up his men, and dividing them into four companies, ordered them to lie in wait at different points on the mountains round about Shechem till the morning. As soon as the sun rose, Gaal and his men, bent upon some enterprise of the exact nature of which we are not told, marched out and halted outside one of the city gates. At his side was Zebul to prevent suspicion, and to bring the rebels into the trap that was laid for them. In the dim morning light, when Gaal sees one of Abimelech's companies moving down from the mountains, " It is nothing," Zebul answers, " but the mountain shadows which you mistake for men." Later on again, Gaal is more certain he sees one company coming " down by the middle of the land," and another " by the way of the augurs' oak ;" and then at last Zebul speaks out plainly, casting his boast back in his teeth, " Where is now thy mouth, that thou saidst, Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him ? is not this the people that thou hast despised ? go out now, I pray, and fight with them." Brought face to face with his enemy, Gaal cannot escape, if he would. He takes, therefore, heart of grace, and in sight of all Shechem, does battle with Abimelech. He is routed, however, and chased back to the city gate, many of his men being wounded or slain. Content with his present success, Abimelech did not enter Shechem yet, but remained at Arumah, whilst his faithful deputy, Zebul, expelled the discredited Gaal and his followers from the city. On the next day the inhabitants of the city came out in large numbers to continue their vintage or other labours in the fields all round. Again Abimelech seized his opportunity for vengeance. Dividing his men into three troops, he led his own division towards the city, and seizing the gate, cut off retreat, while the other " two companies rushed upon all that were in the field and smote them." They then turned upon the city itself, and by the end of the day had succeeded in destroying it and its inhabitants. The ruins were sown with salt, in token of the complete destruction of the city. There still remained the fortified citadel of Millo, however, with the temple of Baal-berith within its walls. The people who occupied

it, on finding themselves also likely to be besieged, took refuge in some place called "the hold of the house of El-berith," which was perhaps an underground cell attached to the temple and covered with a wooden roof. When Abimelech was told of this, he took a supply of axes and went with his men to the wooded heights of Mount Zalmon, and himself setting the example, bade them each without delay cut down a bough of a tree. This done, they returned and set the hold on fire over the refugees' heads. All within were burnt to death to the number of one thousand men and women.

Abimelech's next and last exploit was the laying siege to Thebez, a town 13 miles north-east of Shechem, on the road to Beisan. Here again "there was a strong tower within the city," into which all the men and women fled and shut themselves up. When Abimelech, at the head of the assailants, came up to the walls, the defenders had mounted on to the roof for the purpose of hurling down missiles. Abimelech's doom in fulfilment of Jotham's curse was now come. Close up to the very door of the keep had he ventured in his eager rashness, when "a certain woman cast an upper millstone" (familiar to her hands in her employment as a woman), "and brake his skull. Then he called hastily unto the young man, his armour-bearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and kill me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him." And when the young man, obeying, had saved his master from disgrace, and "the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man unto his place." Jotham's curse was now fulfilled in each respect. Abimelech himself, after a very brief enjoyment of power, had forfeited his life for "the wickedness which he did unto his father in slaying his seventy brethren," while the citizens of Shechem had made a terrible atonement for their unrighteous support of him, both in murdering his brethren and in usurping royal power. The whole episode indeed begins and ends in the gloom and horror of treachery, bloodshed, and general anarchy. We are not told what was the subsequent history of either Jotham, Gaal, or Zebul: the narrative now passes away from the house of Gideon altogether.

Notes on the Text.

ix. 2. **Men of Shechem.** Here and throughout the chapter the word used means rather "lords (*i.e.*, principal citizens) of Shechem." These were partly Israelites and partly Canaanites (according to ver. 28). To the latter class, the calling them sons of Jerubbaal would remind them of Gideon's exploits against their god Baal, and would therefore make his sons as distasteful to them as the idea that they were seventy would-be rulers. "Shechem" is the modern "Nablus."

4. **Seventy (pieces) of silver,** *i.e.*, probably shekels, about £7; a small sum, which was all that he wanted to hire the men suitable to his purpose.

Baal-berith. See viii. 33. **Vain and light,** *i.e.*, immoral and unscrupulous. *Cf.* chap. ix. 3; 1 Sam. xxii. 2; Acts xvii. 5.

6. **All the house of Millo,** *i.e.*, most probably those who lived in the citadel of Shechem (*cf.* vers. 46-49). The Millo of Jerusalem is mentioned in 2 Sam. v. 9, 1 Kings ix. 15, and elsewhere.

A.V., **by the plain** (margin, oak, which is right) **of the pillar that was in Shechem.** Probably the same place as that mentioned in Gen. xxxv. 4 and Josh. xxiv. 26.

7. **In the top of Mount Gerizim,** *i.e.*, on one of the lofty precipices (800 feet high) of Gerizim which overhang Shechem on the south.

9. **Wherewith by me they honour God and man;** R.V. margin, *or which God and man honour in me* (*cf.* Ps. civ. 15).

A.V., **go to be promoted;** R.V., **go to wave to and fro over the trees;** but the A.V. margin perhaps gives the sense better: Heb. **go up and down for other trees,** *i.e.*, to be driven hither and thither in ruling over the trees; so in vers. 11 and 13.

13. **Which cheereth God and man.** The phrase, which is parallel to that in ver. 9, is not to be too closely pressed, being found, not in a theological treatise, but in a fanciful allegory. "To cheer" God means to be used in His service, "a sweet savour unto the Lord" (Numb. xv. 7). Some render "nobles" instead of "God."

14. **All the trees.** Hitherto only "the trees" are spoken of. "This implies that of all the trees not one was willing to be king himself, but that they were unanimous in transferring the

honour to the briar" (Keil and Delitzsch). A.V., **bramble**; margin, *or thistle*; R.V. margin, *or thorn*. "Bramble" seems right.

15. **Trust in my shadow**. Ironical: a bramble casts but little shade, if any. **Fire**. Thorns soon catch fire, and can then destroy the noblest trees. **Lebanon**, a lofty range of mountains on the north of Palestine, running parallel to the coast, about twelve miles inland. Its cedar trees were famous.

18. **Your brother**, *i.e.*, your kinsman; so in ver. 3 twice.

19. **If ye then**, &c. This is simply a repetition of ver. 16, made necessary by the long parenthesis (vers. 17 and 18). Of course the first supposition is a false one, and therefore its consequence is not fulfilled.

20. **If not**. This is the true state of the case, and its twofold consequence to the men of Shechem and to Abimelech was soon fulfilled in vers. 23 and following. *N.B.*—The mutual destruction of ruler and ruled was not illustrated in the parable itself (ver. 15).

21. **Beer**. The modern el Bireh in the Wady es Surâr, west of Jerusalem.

22. A.V., **reigned**; R.V., **was prince**, *i.e.*, exercised a tyrannical sway. **Over Israel**. Probably only Ephraim and Western Manasseh. **Aided**, lit. strengthened his hands (*sc.* with money, ver. 4).

25. **Liers in wait for him**. That is partly to bring discredit on his government by robbery, but also to catch Abimelech himself.

26. **Gaal and his brethren**. Gaal seems to have been the leader of a troop of banditti, here and in ver. 41 called his brethren.

27. A.V., **made merry**; R.V., **held festival**; margin, *or offered a praise-offering*.

28. **Who is Shechem** (= who are we Shechemites) **that we should serve him** (*sc.* Abimelech)? The meaning seems to be, are we not contemptible people to serve men like Abimelech and his underling Zebul?

Men of Hamor, the father of Shechem, *i.e.*, the Canaanitish patricians of the city, who could trace back their descent to the days of Hamor (for whom see Gen. xxxiii. 19 and xxxiv., and Josh. xxiv. 32).

29. **Would to God, &c.** So too said Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 4). **Increase thy army and come out.** This is the challenge of a man excited with wine.

31. A.V., **privily**; margin and R.V., **craftily**; margin, *or in Tormah*; but the latter is unlikely, because no such place is known; and in ver. 41 Abimelech is said to be at "Arumah" (itself also unknown). Zebul pretended to be on the rebels' side all through.

A.V., **fortify**; R.V., **constrain**, *i.e.*, incite.

33. **Come out against thee.** This can hardly be interpreted in the ordinary sense, because it is evident that they were taken by surprise; but what Gaal's enterprise was is left obscure.

35. **Gaal went out, and stood in the entering of the gate of the city.** It is implied that Gaal had his banditti troop with him, and halted them just outside the gate, while he conferred with Zebul, who had come with him, on what he descried in the dim morning light.

37. **By the middle of the land**; margin, Heb. **navel**. The only other place in the Old Testament where the word here used recurs is Ezek. xxxviii. 12, where it is apparently applied to Jerusalem; but both there and here it is doubtful whether the idea to be conveyed is that of a raised or of a central position.

A.V., **by the plain of Meonenim**; R.V., **by the way of the oak of Meonenim**; margin, *that is, the augurs' oak or terebinth*. This landmark is otherwise unknown.

38. **Thy mouth**, viz., thy boastful utterance (vers. 28, 29).

39. **Before the men of Shechem.** Not apparently at their head, but in their sight.

41. **Arumah.** Site unknown. It was either near Shechem, where Abimelech encamped for the night, or his settled abode at that time (see on ver. 31).

42. **Went out into the field.** Not apparently to fight, but to work, perhaps to finish the vintage.

43. **He** (*sc.* Abimelech) **took the people** (*sc.* his own men).

44 describes Abimelech's tactics in the battle. **He and the companies that were with him** (strictly speaking, it was only *one* company) **rushed forward** to the city gate and cut off retreat, while the other two companies fell upon the Shechemites and slew them.

45. **Sowed it with salt**, to symbolise its utter destruction. Such an act is not recorded elsewhere in the Old Testament.

46. **Men of the tower of Shechem** (see ver. 6). **Hold.** Some secret hiding-place, cell, or sanctuary, connected with the house (temple) of the god Berith (R.V., El-berith, *cf.* viii. 33).

48. **Zalmon** (shady), a wooded mountain to the S. of Shechem, behind Gerizim, mentioned in Ps. lxxviii. 14. A.V., **an ax**; R.V. margin, **the axes**, the plural meaning that he took a sufficient supply for every one.

49. **Set the hold on fire upon them.** The expression seems to imply that it was the roof to which he set fire.

50. **Thebez** (modern Tubâs), 13 miles north-east of Shechem.

51. A.V., **shut it to them**; R.V., **shut themselves in**.

52. **Hard** = close or near. *Cf.* "hard by."

53. A.V., **a piece of a millstone**; R.V., **an upper millstone**. The latter is more accurate. The upper stone in a hand-mill, which was ordinarily worked by women, was turned by a handle upon the nether stone, which was fixed on the ground.

A.V., **all to brake**; R.V., **brake** only. "Brake," past tense of "break"; "all-to," an old English adverb = altogether or else "all to-brake," where "to" is an old English prefix; "to-break" = break in pieces.

56, 57. A.V., **rendered**; R.V., **requited**. **The wickedness of the men of Shechem** consisted in supporting and accepting as king Abimelech, the fratricide. **Curse of Jotham**. See ver. 20.

THE JUDGESHIPS OF TOLA AND JAIR.

Chapter x. 1-5.

After Abimelech two judges are briefly mentioned, one in the northern part of Palestine, and one on the east side of Jordan. The first, *Tola*, belonged to the tribe of Issachar. He "arose to save (or defend) Israel," but from what enemy we are not told. His home was at "Shamir, in the hill country of Ephraim." There for twenty-three years he judged the northern tribes of Israel, and there he died, and was buried. The second, *Jair*, belonged to Gilead, on the east of Jordan. He had a family of thirty sons, who kept great state, riding on ass-colts, and each living in one of the thirty cities of Gilead, whose ancient name

of "Havvoth-Jair" they revived. After judging the eastern tribes of Israel for twenty-two years, "Jair died and was buried in Kamon."

Notes on the Text.

x. 1. **Tola** and **Puah** (sometimes Puvah) were well-known names in Issachar (see Gen. xlv. 13, Num. xxvi. 23).

Shamir. Site unknown.

3. **Jair** (= enlightener). **A** (or **the**) **Gileadite**, *i.e.*, born in Gilead, east of Jordan. The Jairus of S. Mark v. 23 lived on the shores of Gennesaret. It seems to have been a common name in Gilead. This Jair is sometimes identified with the judge Bedan mentioned in 1 Sam. xii. 11.

4. **Ass-colts.** A mark of distinction in those days when the Israelites had no horses (*cf.* v. 10).

Havvoth-jair (= cities of Jair). This name had originally been given to towns of Bashan which an earlier Jair of Manasseh had conquered, so that its use was now apparently only revived. See, however, p. 1 for another theory.

5. **Kamon.** Site unknown.

THE JUDGESHIP OF JEPHTHAH.

Chapters x. 6-xii. 7.

After the days of the two peaceful judges (Tola and Jair), the Israelites again fell away into idolatrous practices. They forsook Jehovah and worshipped the gods of Syria, Phœnicia, Moab, Ammon, and Philistia; and in consequence, Jehovah's anger was kindled against them, and He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites. To deal with the latter, Jephthah was raised up, while Samson (as we shall see later on), and after him Samuel, were the appointed instruments of God's power upon the Philistines. The oppression of the Philistines from the south-west lasted forty years; that of the Ammonites from the east was terminated much earlier through the success allowed to Jephthah's arms. These latter poured into the land, and even over the Jordan, in great successive hordes for a period of eighteen years, so that the tribes of Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim were all sore distressed, as well as those that dwelt on

the east of Jordan in Gilead. Towards the end of the eighteen years the children of Israel realised their sins against God, and put away the strange gods from among them and served the Lord ; so that He who had for a time given them unto the gods whom they had chosen to save them, was at length grieved for their misery, and came to their aid.

The last horde of Ammonites that had gathered together for invasion were encamped in Gilead, whilst the Israelite army, which consisted largely of Gileadites, had assembled at Mizpeh, probably not far off.

Thereupon the question arose among the princes of Gilead, Who shall lead us against the invading host? Their thoughts turned to a mighty man of valour named Jephthah. This man was a native of those parts, being the bastard son of a man named Gilead. He had been driven out of his father's home by his half-brothers, and had gone to live in the land of Tob towards the north-east, where a band of wild followers had gathered round him. To him the princes of Gilead now send with the invitation that he should be their captain against Ammon. At first Jephthah not unnaturally declined, remembering the harsh treatment he had formerly received ; but on their pressing the request, he consented, on condition that, if he was successful in the campaign, he should remain their head. So he went back with the deputation, and the engagement was solemnly ratified as in Jehovah's presence at Mizpeh.

Jephthah's first step was to send messengers to the Ammonites, asking the meaning of their invasion. The answer returned was that they meant to recover the lands which the Israelites had taken from them by force between the Arnon and the Jabbok on the east of Jordan. But Jephthah sent back word to them that this was not a true account of what had happened. The lands they now claimed were not in possession of the Ammonites or the Moabites when Israel came out of Egypt and sought a passage into Canaan. Some portions of it had at one time belonged to Ammon and to Moab, but the Amorites had taken them meanwhile, and it was from the Amorites under Sihon and Og that the Israelites had won the district in question ; and they meant to keep it as long as Jehovah allowed them, just as Ammon would keep what their god, Chemosh, gave them. Still further, Balak, the then king of Moab, had never claimed any

portion of the district as his property. Then with what justice could Ammon do so now after three hundred years had elapsed? These arguments, which are in general agreement with the facts as we find them recorded in the Bible, failed of course to convince the invaders. "Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon" Jephthah, and he led out the army against Ammon, after giving utterance to his famous "vow unto the Lord," that if he returned victorious, whatever (or whoever) came forth from his house to meet him should be the Lord's, and (? or) he would offer it up for a burnt offering.

In the battle that ensued the Israelites were entirely successful. They smote the Ammonites with a very great slaughter, and effectually subdued them.

As Jephthah returned to his house at Mizpeh, his only child and daughter, ignorant of her father's vow, and thinking of nothing but of how to do him loving honour, "came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances." But the sight of her struck the conqueror very low in the midst of his triumph, and he rent his clothes; for he must keep the vow which Jehovah had heard. But she, when he told her, still showed how dutiful a daughter she was, by quiet resignation to that which must befall her. "Do to me," she said, "that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth." One request, however, she makes. Let me first have two months in undisturbed meditation and lamentation for my virginity among the hills with my girl-friends, and then I will return to you. This being granted, two months later the unhappy father "did with her according to his vow;"* and ever afterwards, year by year, for four days the maidens of Israel went to mourn for Jephthah's daughter, whose happy life and prospects had been so tragically cut short.

The men of Gilead were true to their engagement with Jephthah, and he judged the district for six years, till his death, when he was buried in one of the towns of Gilead. But some time between his victory and his death, probably very soon after the former event, one more incident in his career is recorded. He, like Gideon before him, had difficulties with the presumptuous and overbearing men of Ephraim, though his manner of dealing with them was quite unlike Gideon's soft answer, which turned away wrath. "The men of Ephraim," we read,

* For the various difficulties in this story consult the notes throughout.

"were gathered together," and marched in a body to expostulate with Jephthah for not calling in their aid, and to threaten the burning down of his house over him in consequence. Jephthah's reply was a direct denial. He had invited them; they had refused; and he had therefore put his life in his hand and run the risk alone, and the Lord had delivered Ammon into his hand. Not content with refuting them in word, he took vigorous action also. He gathered his troops together, and fought with them and smote them. They had, it seems, taunted the Gileadites with being the fugitives (*i.e.*, the offscouring and refuse) of Ephraim. Jephthah now shows them who are the real fugitives of Ephraim. For he and his army seized the fords of Jordan against the fleeing Ephraimites, and as they came down one by one to the bank, the question was put, "Art thou an Ephraimite?" If he said Nay, the test of pronouncing the Hebrew word *Shibboleth* (stream) was tried upon him. If he said *Sibboleth* (following the Ephraimite pronunciation), he was self-condemned, and slain on the spot. As many as forty thousand of Ephraim are said to have perished during this campaign.

Notes on the Text.

x. 6. (1) **Baalim** (pl.) and (2) **Ashtaroth** (pl.), the male and female gods of Canaan. (3) **Gods of Syria** (Heb. Aram); their names are never mentioned in Scripture. (4) **Gods of Sidon**; the chief Phœnician goddess was Astarte. (5) **Gods of Moab**, especially Chemosh. (6) **Gods of the children of Ammon**, especially Milcom or Moloch, the fire-god, to whom they sacrificed children (see Lev. xx. 1-5). (7) **Gods of the Philistines**, especially Dagon (see p. 7, and *cf.* chap. xvi. 23 and 1 Sam. v.). For the other gods, *cf.* Kings xi. 1-8. Notice the seven (always a mystic number with the Jews) forms of idolatry counterbalancing the seven deliverances hitherto wrought by Jehovah (vers. 11, 12).

7. The oppression of the Philistines on the south-west, which lasted forty years, till the days of Samuel, and to some extent even longer, till the days of David, began about the same time as the oppression of the Ammonites from the east of Jordan, which lasted eighteen years (ver. 8).

10. **Baalim** here includes all the gods enumerated in ver. 6.

11. **The Lord said**, not as before by His angel (chap. ii.) or by a prophet (chap. vi.), but either by the high priest or by the conscience (Keil and Delitzsch): (1) **from the Egyptians**, by Moses; (2) **from the Amorites** (Numb. xxi.); (3) **from the children of Ammon**, by Ehud (chap. iii. 13); (4) **from the Philistines**, by Shamgar (chap. iii. 31); (5) **from the Zidonians**, ?as allies of Jabin by Barak (chap. v. 19); (6) **from the Amalekites** (chap. iii. 13 and vi. 3); (7) **and the Maonites**. These are thought to be a small tribe of Arabs living in Edom called Mehunim (2 Chron. xxvi. 7);* but it is probable that the Greek of the Septuagint has kept the true original "Midian" from whom Gideon had delivered Israel in chaps. vi., vii.

16. **His soul was grieved** (lit., impatient). A remarkable instance of so-called "anthropomorphic" language, *i.e.*, attributing to God feelings, words, or actions, which can properly be attributed only to man. This is very common in Old Testament.

17. **Mizpeh** (= watch-tower). Probably the town of Ramath Mizpeh (Josh. xiii. 26), or Ramoth in Mount Gilead (Josh. xx. 8). The modern es Salt. Others place it more to the north.

18. A.V., **the people and princes**, properly "the people, viz., the princes or leading men;" so R.V.

xi. 1. **Gilead** is to be taken as actually the name of Jephthah's father, who as so often bore the name of the distinguished ancestor of the Gileadites (Numb. xxvi. 29). Vers. 1-3 are a short digression from the main narrative, introducing the new hero.

2. A.V., **a strange woman**; R.V., **another woman**.

3. **The land of Tob** (= good), to the north-east, on the borders of Syria.

Vain fellows. See ix. 4.

5. **The elders of Gilead**, viz., the "princes" of x. 18. These apparently included Jephthah's half-brothers (see ver. 7).

11. **Spake all his words** (*i.e.*, repeated aloud the term of his engagement) **before the Lord** (*i.e.*, solemnly, as in Jehovah's presence, not before an altar or a priest).

13. **From Arnon** (on the south, modern Mojeb, it flows into the Dead Sea) **even unto Jabbok** (on the north, modern Zerka), **and unto Jordan** (on the west). The point of dispute is that the Ammonites claim this district as properly their own, whereas

* See, however, Sayce (Higher Criticism, pp. 39 and foll.) for fresh light on the subject.

Jephthah maintains that at the time that the Israelites gained the occupation of it, it was in the possession of the Amorites, not of the Ammonites or Moabites, and that therefore it was theirs by right of conquest. Jephthah's account is at all events in agreement with the Mosaic history (Numb. xxi.)

16. **Kadesh**, a district in the north-western part of Paran.

17. The sending to Moab is not recorded in Numb. xx. ; but they had been forbidden to "vex" either Moab or Ammon in Deut. ii. 9, 19.

18. **The wilderness** = the Arabah. **On the other side of Arnon**, *i.e.*, on the northern bank, or perhaps on the upper part of the river "which is in the wilderness" (Numb. xxi. 13). The Arnon was the northernmost boundary of Moab.

19. **Heshbon** (= stronghold), about thirty miles almost due east of Jerusalem. **Unto my place**, *viz.*, Canaan, the land of promise.

20. **A.V., coast ; R.V., border.** So in ver. 22 and elsewhere. **Jahaz**. Site uncertain. Thought to be close to the southern bank of the Arnon, a few miles south of Dibon.

24. **Chemosh** seems to have been the god of Ammon as well as of Moab. The argument of this verse is a sort of corollary to the main contention.

25, 26. This is a new supplementary argument. If Balak, king of Moab, never actively disputed our claim, with what show of right can you now dispute it after an interval of three hundred years ?

25. For **Balak** see Numb. xxii., xxiii.

26. **Towns** (Heb. **daughters**), *viz.*, outlying villages (*cf.* i. 27).

Aroer (=enclosed). Not Aroer of Reuben, which is on the north bank of Arnon (Deut. ii. 36), but Aroer of Gad "before Rabbah" (Josh. xiii. 25), which must be sought somewhere on the Jabbok further north. **Three hundred years**—a round number which, if correct, seems to have been made up as follows :—

After the division among the tribes . . .	10 years.
Oppression of Cushan-rishathaim . . .	8 "
Rest	40 "
Moabites' oppression	18 "
Rest	80 "
Oppression of Jabin	20 "
Rest	40 "

Midianites' oppression	7 years.
Rest	40 "
Abimelech's rule	3 "
Judgeship of Tola	23 "
Judgeship of Jair	22 "
Ammonites' oppression	18 "
	<hr/>
	329 years.

27. **The Lord, the Judge** (*cf.* Gen. xviii. 25).

29. **The Spirit of the Lord** (*cf.* iii. 10 ; vi. 34).

Mizpeh of Gilead. Probably the same as Mizpah of x. 17, where the Israelites were encamped.

31. A.V. and R.V., **whatsoever cometh forth** ; but the margin of R.V. is probably right, **whosoever**. Jephthah seems to have had a human being in his mind (repugnant as the idea is to modern minds) ; so Augustine (quoted by Keil and Delitzsch) takes it without hesitation. A.V., **and I will** ; margin, **or**.

33. **Minnith** (=allotment). A tract of land famous for its wheat (Ezek. xxvii. 17), four miles east of Heshbon. A.V., **unto the plain of the vineyards** ; R.V., **Abel-cheramim**. Probably the place of that name not far from Rabbah.

34. **With timbrels and with dances**. So Miriam and her women in Exod. xv. 20 ; *cf.* also 1 Sam. xviii. 6, &c.

36. **Forasmuch as**. The connection of thought seems rightly conveyed by S.P.C.K. edition : "He complains that the appearance of his daughter had brought on him as great affliction as if the enemy had overcome him. She accepts the phrase, and says (ver. 36), Submit then to this trouble, since the Ammonites have been made to submit to you."

37. **Upon the mountains** (*sc.* in solitude, as such a theme demanded). **Bewail my virginity**. The ordinary interpretation is apparently correct that she shared the feeling of disgrace at childlessness common to women in ancient times (and particularly to Hebrew women, from the hope of bearing the Messiah).

39. **Who did with her according to his vow**, viz., in ver. 31. Two opposite views are maintained on this question, which will probably never be settled : (1) that the maiden was *actually* made a burnt sacrifice to God, in spite of the Hebrew hatred of such sacrifice to Moloch ; (2) that she was made a *spiritual*

burnt-offering by being kept unmarried the rest of her days, Jephthah's original intention being modified to suit the peculiar circumstances. Difficult as it is in the present day to understand it, the former view seems best supported, and the R.V. (by altering the next phrase, "she knew not a man," into "she had not known man") apparently pronounces in its favour. The idea of human sacrifices was not unknown in Jewish history (*e.g.*, Gen. xxii. 1-19; Lev. xxvii. 29; and 1 Sam. xv. 33), nor in Greek legend (*e.g.*, that of Iphigeneia). In Jephthah's case God's approval is not at all necessarily implied, any more than in the case of Ehud and others, these things being written for our ensample, warning, or instruction, as the case may be. Nor can the plea of haste and excitement be made in palliation of the vow, which was obviously as deliberately uttered as possible.

40. A.V., **lament**; R.V., **celebrate**. The meaning "talk with" seems to be inadmissible. The word is the same as that translated "rehearse" in chap. v. 11.

xii. 1. **Men of Ephraim**. They had acted similarly to Gideon (viii. 1). **Northward**, *i.e.*, towards Eastern Manasseh, but more probably R.V. margin is right, **to Zaphon**, a place in Gad in the Jordan valley mentioned in Josh. xiii. 27.

2. **When I called you**. This call is not mentioned in chap. xi., perhaps because it was without effect.

3. **I put my life in my hand** (*sc.* I ran the risk of the attempt myself). Jephthah's answer is very different to Gideon's, and also his consequent actions.

4. **Fugitives of Ephraim**, *i.e.*, runaway Ephraimites. "An obscure set of men, men of no name dwelling in the midst of two most noble and illustrious tribes" (Rosenmüller, quoted by Keil and Delitzsch). In ver. 5 the phrase has its literal sense, though of course intentionally repeated.

5. A.V., **before the Ephraimites**; R.V., **against**; margin, **towards**.

6. **Shibboleth** (=stream). From this passage it appears that Ephraim pronounced the Hebrew letter *sh* like the letter *s* (*cf.* xviii. 3). So in Somerset *s* is pronounced like a *z*. **Forty-two thousand** seems an extraordinarily large number to have fallen in this war. In Numb. ii. 19 the whole strength of the tribe is given as 40,500.

7. **(One of) the towns of Gilead.** The form of the expression implies that the exact place of burial was not known.

THE JUDGESHIP OF IBZAN.

Chapter xii. 8-10.

After Jephthah's death, Ibzan of Bethlehem (in Zebulon) judged Israel (*i.e.*, probably the north-eastern portion of it only) for seven years. Of him it is only recorded that he had thirty sons and thirty daughters, each of whom he succeeded in settling comfortably in matrimony. He died and was buried in his native town.

Notes on the Text.

8. **Ibzan** (= splendid). **Bethlehem**, not of Judah, but of Zebulon (*cf.* Josh. xix. 15).

9. **Sent abroad**, *i.e.*, gave in marriage.

THE JUDGESHIP OF ELON.

Chapter xii. 11, 12.

Ibzan was succeeded by Elon, likewise a Zebulonite, who judged (probably the same district of) Israel for ten years. No detail whatever is given of this judge, save that, when he died, he "was buried in Aijalon in the land of Zebulun."

Notes on the Text.

11. **Elon** (= strong).

12. **Aijalon**. Probably a place now called Jalun: not the Ajalon of Josh. x. 12.

THE JUDGESHIP OF ABDON.

Chapter xii. 13-15.

The third in succession to Jephthah was Abdon, the son of Hillel, a native of Pirathon in Ephraim, on the mountains of

the Amalekites. He judged Israel (*i.e.*, perhaps a slightly more southerly district than the last two) for eight years. As in the case of Ibzan, the largeness and prosperity of his family is the only thing dwelt upon in the record. He had forty sons and thirty grandsons, who, like Jair's children (in chap. x. 4) were each able to ride on his own ass-colt. Abdon was buried in his native town among the hills.

Notes on the Text.

13. **Abdon** (= worshipper). **A Pirathonite** (*sc.* a native of Pirathon, a village to the south-west of Shechem, now called Feráta; mentioned also in 2 Sam. xxiii. 30; 1 Chron. xi. 31, &c.).

14. A.V., **nephews**; R.V., **sons' sons**. **Rode on seventy ass colts** (*cf.* chap. x. 4).

15. **Mount** (or hill country) **of the Amalekites**. A district of Ephraim was so called, because originally a stronghold of Amalek (*cf.* chap. v. 14).

N.B.—The scantiness of the record, and the impression of peace and prosperity left by its few details, lead us to suppose that these three successors of Jephthah, who himself only lived to execute his judgeship six years, reaped the benefits of his deliverance to a large extent, and that consequently in their days that portion of Israel at least in which they lived and exercised authority was free from invasion and oppression. The same inference may perhaps be made with regard to Tola and Jair (chap. x. 1–5).

THE FEATS OF SAMSON.

Chapters xiii.–xvi.

Whilst the north-eastern tribes were oppressed for eighteen years by the Ammonite invader, and at last delivered from their oppression through Jephthah's victory, the Philistines in the south-west were exercising a tyranny which lasted more than twice that period (forty years), and was not to any appreciable extent mitigated till the time of Samuel, in spite of the pro-

digious feats accomplished by Samson, which come next to be recorded.

At Zorah, on the borders of Dan and Judah, and in the neighbourhood of the Philistines, a Danite named Manoah was living about the commencement of this period. His wife was childless, to her grief and to his. One day the angel of the Lord, of whom we have already heard, appeared to her and promised she should bear a son ; but until the child was born she was herself to observe the greatest strictness in her food and drink : for her son was to be a Nazirite unto God all his life long, abstaining from wine and strong drink, and letting his hair grow long, in token that God had a mission for him to perform, in "beginning to save Israel from the Philistines." All this the wife came and told Manoah, though she did not yet fully understand who her visitor had been. Then Manoah entreated the Lord that "the man of God" might come again and give them fuller instructions about the rearing of the child. In answer to this prayer some time after the angel came again to the woman as she sat alone in the field. On seeing him she ran in haste to fetch Manoah, and they, coming back together, questioned the angel, and received from him a repetition of his former commands. Thereupon Manoah, still ignorant of his visitor's name, begged the angel to wait while a kid was made ready for him : to which request the angel's answer was that he would not eat of food as a guest, but that if it was meant as a burnt offering, it must be offered unto Jehovah. He also refused to reveal his name, as being secret or wonderful, just as Jacob at Peniel was refused. So, when the kid was ready, Manoah took the kid and offered it on the rock with the meat-offering enjoined by the law of Moses. Then at last the wonderful nature of their visitor was clearly shown ; for as the flames went up from the rock-altar to the sky, the angel also went up in them, so that Manoah and his wife, who were looking on, fell on their faces to the ground in reverent awe. No more such visits were vouchsafed them, and they knew they had been visited by so Divine a Being that Manoah felt the old dread lest they should have to die for having seen God. His wife, however, reassured him by the correct inference that, "if the Lord were pleased to kill" them, "He would not have received" their offerings nor "showed" them "all these things." In due time the promise was fulfilled,

and Samson was born and grew up to manhood under Jehovah's blessing, and in the strict observance of his Nazirite vow.

When he was probably about eighteen or nineteen years of age, he began to feel more strongly the mysterious promptings of "the Spirit of the Lord" within him to carry out what Jehovah had appointed for him towards the ultimate breaking off of the Philistines' yoke from Israel. It must, however, be remembered that in Samson we have no ideal hero of extraordinary saintliness, but, as very often with God's chosen instruments, a man with very obvious defects of character, in his case, no doubt, consequent to some extent upon his enormous physical strength. It is impossible, however, not to admire the strong, warm-hearted, simple-minded giant, and the half-barbarous nobility of his self-inflicted death.

The first recorded incident is in connection with his marriage. Going down from Zorah to a place called Timnath, whose inhabitants were Philistines, he saw there a woman who attracted him. He therefore came back home, and asked his father to go through the usual formalities for getting her as his wife. At first, not knowing that it was the Lord's will, both his parents objected strongly to such a marriage, which was forbidden by the law of Moses. After a time, however, father, mother, and son went down together to see the woman and her family. On the way down the rocky vine-clad slopes which led into the plain, the young lover, wandering apart from the others, was suddenly attacked by a roaring young lion. In a mighty access of strength, Samson rent the beast to pieces as he would have rent a kid, and rejoined his parents without saying a word in his simple modesty about the danger he had overcome. His second visit to Timnath strengthened his love for the woman of his choice; and the wedding was arranged. So after a while the three returned again to Timnath to take the bride home. When they came near the scene of his exploit, Samson turned aside with natural curiosity to see the carcase of the lion, and found that in the interval a swarm of bees had stored their honey in the sun-dried body. Gathering some of the honey in his hands, and eating as he went, he overtook his parents once more, and shared the refreshing food with them, but still without revealing his secret. When they reached Timnath, Samson followed the custom of that day and place in preparing a seven-

days' marriage-feast, in which thirty men of the place were associated with him as his groomsmen. By way of amusement Samson propounded to them this riddle, which his recent adventures with the lion had suggested : "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." If, before the feast was over, they could find the answer, he would give them each a linen shirt and a new outer robe. Three days passed, and no light came to them ; and then they either gave up trying till the last day, or else used all the last four days in urging the bride to get the answer for them from Samson. At all events, on the seventh day he at last yielded to her woman's argument of tears, and told it her, so that, before the sun went down, the thirty groomsmen came to him with their answer neatly put in question form, "What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion?" But Samson, for all his simple-mindedness, was not hoodwinked. With quiet sarcasm he replies, "If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle;" and then in very natural indignation, determined to keep his word and at the same time wreak his vengeance on whom he could, he went to Ashkelon, smote thirty men of the city, and brought their apparel to his groomsmen in payment of his promise. Still full of wrath, he left his wife at Timnath, and went back alone to Zorah.

Later on in the same season, when the wheat harvest was ripe, and Samson's wrath had grown cool, he went down on a visit of reconciliation to his wife, taking a kid as a present. But what was his surprise to find that meanwhile she had been given to that one of the thirty who had acted as his own "best man!" Her father's excuse was that he thought Samson had hated her for her falseness, and he now offers him her younger sister instead. This time, says Samson, no one can blame me for the revenge which I shall take upon you. So he went and caught three hundred jackals (or foxes), which he sent in pairs into the half-cut cornfields and the oliveyards, turning tail to tail, and tying a lighted torch between every two tails. The Philistines soon discovered who had done them this mischief, and why ; so they went to Timnath, and burned the woman and her father with fire. Once more, and for the last time, Samson determined to punish the Philistines for this cowardly deed. He went down into the plain and "smote

them hip and thigh with a great slaughter," and then took refuge in the mountain-cave of Etam.

Not long after this the Philistines came up into the hill country of Judah, and encamped at a place which was afterwards called Lehi (jawbone); the object of their inroad being to capture Samson. Three thousand men of Judah therefore went down to Etam, resolved to free themselves by delivering up Samson bound; and he nobly delivered himself up to them, on condition that they should only hand him over to the enemy and not kill him themselves. This they undertook, and brought him bound with two new ropes to the Philistines, who shouted in exultation at the sight. But Samson, in one of his sudden accesses of furious strength, burst his bonds as if they were burnt flax, and taking up a new jawbone of an ass which he found, smote a great number of the Philistines therewith; and this was the song of triumph that he sang:—

“ With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps,
With the jawbone of an ass have I smitten a thousand men.”

Then he flung the jawbone away, and called the place Ramath-lehi (Jawbone hill). But exhausted now with his huge exertions in the blazing sun, he was so sore athirst that he thought he would die, and fall into the enemy's hands after all. Then he called upon Jehovah, and God made water to spring out of a hollow in the mountain side. And in commemoration of the incident the spring was named En-hakkore (the crier's well), and was still so called at the time when the Book of Judges was compiled.

For a period of about twenty years after these exploits, our present hero is said to have “judged Israel in the days of the Philistines.” The remainder of the story is connected with the gloomy end of his career. On one occasion he was lodging for the night at Gaza, and the men of the city laid wait for him at the gate, thinking to catch him as he went out at dawn. But whilst they fell asleep at their post, Samson arose at midnight, plucked up the closed and barred city-gates, together with the very side-posts, and carried them on his shoulders up a steep sandy hill, which lay in the direction of Hebron eastward.

Some time after this he loved a woman of the Philistines named Delilah, who lived in the valley of Sorek. Whilst he

was staying with her, the Philistine princes conceived the idea of getting to know through her the secret of Samson's strength, which, they seem to have thought, lay in the possession of some amulet or charm, and would depart with the loss of it. So they agreed to give her 1100 pieces of silver each if she could find this out, and render him helpless when they came to bind him. Three times in vain, with liers in wait to help her in the room, she tried her wiles upon him to coax him into telling her. The first time he told her his strength would go from him if she bound him with seven green withes (or bowstrings). But when she did so, and cried out, "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson," he broke the withes "as a string of tow is broken when it toucheth fire." Another time he told her to substitute new ropes which had never been used for the green withes, but when she tried the same thing happened to them. The third time he went so perilously near to the real secret of his strength (viz., his Nazirite vow, of which his unshorn locks were the outer token), that we are not surprised at Delilah finally succeeding. He now bade her weave his heavy locks of hair into the web of the loom that stood in the chamber where they were. So, while he was asleep, she wove them in and secured them firmly. But when she woke him with her cry of "The Philistines be upon thee," he simply rose and pulled away the whole contrivance on his locks. Nothing daunted, Delilah still plied him with her importunities, till at last Samson told her the truth, that he had been "a Nazirite unto God" from his birth, and if his head were shaven his strength would go. At last she felt she had his secret, and called for the Philistine princes to come up this once. So, when they came and brought the money they had promised in their hands, she made Samson sleep upon her knees, and after calling one of them for safety into the room, shaved off all his hair and bound his arms with bonds. Then at her usual cry he awoke, and not knowing that Jehovah had forsaken him now, thought to shake himself free as at other times, but in vain. The Philistines laid hold of him, put out his eyes, and bringing him down to Gaza, bound him with brazen fetters, and made him grind at a handmill in the prison-house.

After an interval, during which his hair began to show itself again, the lords of the Philistines held high festival, and offered a great sacrifice to their god Dagon, who had delivered the

destroyer of their country into their hands. As they feasted and grew merry, they sent for the poor blind giant to amuse them, and set him in full view by the pillars which supported the flat roof on which 3000 men and women were crowded to see the sport, while the princes sat below. After a while Samson feigned weariness, and begged the lad that held him by the hand to lean his arms upon the two central pillars for rest. Then he prayed the Lord this once to give him strength to avenge his loss of sight upon his hated enemies. His prayer was granted; and adding the words "let me die with the Philistines," he bowed himself with all his might and brought the overweighted roof down with a mighty crash upon himself and those below. "So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." So terror-stricken were the Philistines at this awful catastrophe, that they allowed Samson's kinsmen, without protest, to come down and take away his body for burial in his father's grave between Zorah and Eshtaol. And with this tragical story, in strict chronology the Book of Judges comes to an end.

Notes on the Text.

xiii. 1. **Into the hand of the Philistines.** This is the oppression already referred to in chap. x. 7.

2. **Zorah**, partly Judæan and partly Danite (Josh. xv. 33; xix. 41, &c.). The modern Sura, just to the north of the Wady es Surar, and almost due west of Jerusalem. The circumstances of the birth of Samson probably took place within the forty years of Philistine oppression.

3. **The angel of the Lord** (*cf.* vi. 12, &c.).

4. **Strong drink**, *i.e.*, fermented liquor other than wine.

5. A.V., **Nazarite**; R.V., **Nazirite** (= separated). In Samson's case the mother was to observe the Nazirite vows to ensure extraordinary strictness in the son. Other life-Nazarites in the Bible were Samuel (1 Sam. i. 11) and John Baptist (S. Luke i. 15). *Begin to save*, but not complete the deliverance, which was not accomplished till the time of Samuel, or even later.

6. **A man of God** (*sc.* a prophet); for that at first is what she thought *the* angel of the Lord to be.

12. **Now let thy words**, &c. The margin of R.V. is more literal

and gives the sense better, **now when thy words come to pass, what shall be the manner** (or ordering) **of the child, and what shall be his work** (or how shall we do unto him)?

14. **Not eat of anything that cometh of the vine.** This prohibition is now added to the others in accordance with Numb. vi. 3.

16. The **angel of the Lord** will not be entertained as man nor worshipped as God. A.V., **knew not that he was an angel**; R.V., *the angel*. So also ver. 21 below.

17. **What is thy name?** So Jacob at Penuel (Gen. xxxii. 31). The name was expressive (very often literally so) of a person's office and attributes to a Hebrew.

18. A.V., **secret**; R.V., **wonderful** (cf. ver. 19 and Isa. ix. 6).

19. A.V., **a meat offering**; R.V., **the meal offering** (see Numb. xv. 4). **(The angel) did wondrously.** Others consider "the Lord" to be the subject of the verb.

20. **Fell on their faces to the ground** (*sc.* in worship, Lev. ix. 24).

22. Cf. vi. 22, and for the idea Exod. xxxiii. 20. Of course the wife's inferences are here correct.

24. **Samson** (Heb. **Shimshon** = strong. Others consider it means "hero of the sun," but less probably).

And the Lord blessed him. So of Samuel (1 Sam. iii. 19) and of Jesus Himself (S. Luke ii. 52).

25. **Began to move** (lit., to thrust, an expressive phrase). A.V., **the camp of Dan**; R.V., **Mahaneh-dan**. A place mentioned also in chap. xviii. 12. **Eshtaol**. Site doubtful, but see Josh. xv. 33.

xiv. 1. **Timnath**. A place (now called Tibne) to the west of Zorah, and further down the rocky slopes of the hills that border the Shephelah, or lowland, in which the Philistines dwelt.

2. **Get her for me** (*sc.* by paying a dowry and gift, as in Gen. xxxiv. 12).

3. Marriage was not forbidden, though perhaps less frequent with life-Nazirites than with others; but the parents' objection was based upon the prohibition by the law of marriage with the Canaanites, among whom Philistines would be included (Josh. xiii. 3).

4. A.V., *that* **(he) sought**; R.V., *for* **(he) sought**. The subject is either the Lord or Samson. **At that time.** This

phrase shows that the compiler of Judges wrote after Israel had been freed from the Philistine yoke.

5. **The vineyards of Timnath.** Travellers still speak of these growing up the wild gorges, in which one would expect "to find a lion in these days" (quoted in S.P.C.K. edition).

6. **He rent him.** So David (1 Sam. xvii. 35) and Benaiah (2 Sam. xxiii. 20); but these, though unaided, were not like Samson weaponless.

8. **After a time.** The betrothal is described in vers. 5-7, between which and the wedding proper (now to be related) an interval of some days or even months used to take place. **To take her, i.e.,** to his own home as his wife.

A swarm of bees. There was an ancient idea that bees could be generated in the carcase of an ox by a method which, together with its discovery, is fully described in a famous passage of Virgil's Fourth Georgic (295-558). It is known, however, that bees avoid anything that is putrid, and it is thought that here the sun's violent heat had (as it often does in the East) so completely dried up the dead lion that putrefaction had had no time to set in, and that the dry skeleton had been chosen by the wild bees for their hive, just as in Herodotus we read of a honeycomb in a dry skull.

10. **Samson made there** (*sc.* at Timnath) **a (marriage) feast.** It was more usual for the bride's parents to do this. The feast in this case lasted seven days. Sometimes it lasted even longer.

11. **They brought.** The subject is the bride's parents, who did for Samson as a stranger among them what it was more usual for the bridegroom to do for himself. **Thirty companions, i.e.,** the groomsmen or children of the bridechamber (S. Matt. ix. 15).

12. **A.V., thirty sheets; R.V., linen garments, i.e.,** the under garments worn next to the skin. **Thirty changes of raiment.** These seem to be new and costly outer garments.

14. **In three days.** It is a little difficult to reconcile this and the other two notes of time (ver. 15, **on the seventh day**, and ver. 17, **the seven days**) with one another. Perhaps what happened is something like this: for the first three days the thirty young men tried honestly to solve the riddle, and then either gave it up altogether till the last day, when they appealed

to the bride as a final chance, or else importuned her more and more strongly from the fourth to the seventh day, she meanwhile having been using her wiles upon Samson during the whole time. In ver. 15, for "seventh" the Septuagint (Greek) and the Syriac version read "fourth," which involves a very slight change in the Hebrew. In ver. 17, the margin of A.V. suggests (**the rest of the seven days**).

15. A.V., **to take that we have** ; R.V., **to impoverish us**.

17. A.V., **lay sore upon him** ; R.V., **pressed him hard**.

18. **The men of the city**, viz., the thirty young men, "the children of her people." **Plowed**. (*N.B.*—The ancient spelling of ploughed.) Treasures are often turned up in ploughing. Samson's neatness in enigmatical sayings is remarkable.

20. **His companion, whom he had used as his friend**, i.e., no doubt that one of the thirty whom he had selected as "best man," "the conductor of the bride," "the friend of the bridegroom" (S. John iii. 29). Samson had not meant to forsake his bride, as is clear from xv. 1.

xv. 1. **The time of wheat harvest**, i.e., probably the end of May or the beginning of June. The note of time is marked to account for the standing corn in ver. 5. The wedding had probably taken place earlier in the spring. **A kid**. A customary present.

3. A.V., **concerning them** ; R.V., **to them** (*sc.* to the father and others who had gathered round him).

A.V., **now shall I be more blameless than the Philistines, though I do them a displeasure** ; R.V., **this time shall I be blameless in regard to** (margin, **quits with**) **the Philistines, when I do them a mischief**, i.e., this time if not last time I am justified in the revenge which I take upon you for your treatment of me.

4. **Foxes** ; margin of R.V., **jackals**, which are very common in the country still. A somewhat similar device of Hannibal's is related by Livy (xxii. 17). He fastened torches to the horns of two thousand cattle to produce a night alarm. Ovid (in the *Fasti*, iv. 681) also tells us of a very curious Roman custom of tying lighted torches to foxes' tails at the Cerealia, in commemoration of the damage once done by a peasant's freak. The suggestion that the word translated "foxes" should be altered to "handfuls of straw" must be abandoned.

5. A.V., **with the vineyards (and) olives** ; R.V., and also the oliveyards.

7. A.V., **though ye have done this** ; R.V., **if ye do after this manner**, *i.e.*, if ye are such cowards as to act thus, I will wreak one more act of vengeance upon you before I stop.

8. **Hip and thigh**. Proverbial for great violence.

In the top (R.V., **cleft**) **of the rock Etam**. The site of this cave in the rock's face is uncertain.

9. **In Lehi** (=a jaw). Not so called apparently till now (see ver. 17). Site doubtful.

12. **Fall upon me**, *i.e.*, to kill me, as ver. 13 shows.

13. A.V., **cords** ; R.V., **ropes**.

14. A.V., **loosed** ; R.V., **dropped** ; Heb. **melted**.

15. A.V., **slew a thousand** ; R.V., **smote**. The number is to be taken poetically.

16. Samson's comment upon his exploit is in poetry, and contains a play upon the Hebrew word, which means both **ass** and **heap**. **Heaps upon heaps** ; Heb. **an heap, two heaps**, *i.e.*, one heap after another, as the English translation implies.

17. **Ramath-lehi**. This name properly means "the jaw-bone height" (perhaps from the tooth-like shape of the crags), but the writer here seems to imply that it was so called because of Samson's throwing away of the jawbone, and so the A.V. margin renders it, though this requires a slightly different Hebrew reading.

18. **Sore athirst**. It was hot weather (ver. 1), and his exertions had been great. A.V., **given this great deliverance into the hand** ; R.V., **by the hand**.

19. A.V., **an hollow place that was in the jaw** ; R.V., **the hollow place that is in Lehi** (margin, *or the jawbone*). There can be little doubt that the older rendering is wrong. In answer to Samson's prayer God made water to spring out of a hollow (lit. a mortar) in "the jawbone height," as for Moses at Horeb (Exod. xvii. 6), and at Kadesh (Numb. xx. 11).

En-hakkore=the spring of him that called.

20. **He judged Israel twenty years**. If Samson was born within the forty years of Philistine oppression (see xiii. 2), Samson's judgeship, which was no doubt confined to southwestern Israel, lasted till nearly the end of the forty years, for he must have been at least eighteen or nineteen when he performed

his heroic exploits. In that case Eli's judgeship of forty years (1 Sam. iv. 18) was prior to Samson's, and Samuel's almost immediately subsequent; and all three were confined to the same area, while Jephthah and his three successors exercised a contemporaneous judgeship in north-eastern Israel. (See Notes *in loc.*)

Chap. xvi. contains an account of Samson's fall and death.

1. **Gaza** (Heb. **Azzah**=strong; modern Ghuzzeh). One of the five chief Philistine cities (Josh. xiii. 3), in the extreme south of Judah. It is still a considerable town.

2. **And it was told.** These words have fallen out of the original Hebrew text.

Were quiet, *i.e.*, probably asleep.

3. **A.V., went away with them; R.V., plucked them up.** So also in ver. 14. **To the top of an hill that is before Hebron.** Hebron is quite twenty miles off, so that some hill in the direction of Hebron from Gaza seems most likely to be indicated.

4. **In the valley of Sorek; margin, by the brook.** The site is doubtful. Sorek is a variety of grape. **Delilah** (=weak).

5. **Wherein his great strength lieth.** Possibly they thought it lay in some charm or amulet, which she could get possession of.

Eleven hundred (pieces) of silver (*cf.* xvii. 2). If the five lords each brought this sum, and if the unit of reckoning is a silver shekel (2s. 3d.), the large amount of £618 would be contributed.

7. **A.V., Green withs; margin, or new cords; R.V. margin, new bowstrings.**

9. **A.V., in the chamber; R.V., in the inner chamber.** So again in ver. 12. **Toucheth the fire; Heb. smelleth.** **His strength was not known**, *i.e.*, the secret of his strength.

11. **A.V., new ropes that never were occupied; margin and R.V., wherewith no work hath been done.**

13. **Seven locks.** Seven was a sacred number (*cf.* the seven green withs of ver. 7). It may have been for this reason that Samson arranged his hair in seven locks or plaits.

The web. Delilah's loom stood in the room, with the upright warp upon it, in process of being woven with the woof.

Samson's locks are to be inserted with the woof, and form part of the texture of the cloth.

14. **She fastened it** (*sc.* either the loom itself or the cloth) **with the pin.** The exact meaning is doubtful. Evidently she did something which would keep either the loom itself or the cloth upon it more securely in its position, and on waking and rising Samson pulled away with him either the whole loom or the cloth and pin. Thus the pin of the beam (or loom) is either a peg for fastening the loom to the wall (as the Greek LXX.), or part of the roller at the top of the loom on which the cloth was rolled as it was finished, or the comb for pressing the threads together.

18. **For he hath** (rather **had**) **shewed me** (rather **her**) **all his heart** are not Delilah's words, but the historian's comment.

A.V., **money** ; R.V., *the money*, viz., that promised in ver. 5.

19. **Called for a man** ; R.V. margin, **the men.** Probably one of those mentioned in vers. 9 and 12 as lying in wait, that she might not be alone with Samson.

A.V., **caused to shave off** ; R.V., **shaved off** (*sc.* herself).

20. **Shake myself** (*sc.* loose from the bonds Delilah had bound on him).

He wist. Past tense of wit (=know). **The Lord was departed from him**, in consequence of his breaking the vow of a Nazirite.

21. **Grind**, *i.e.*, corn, probably in a handmill, the special labour of slaves.

22. **The hair began to grow again after** (margin, **as when he was shaven**). This partly marks the lapse of time during which he was in captivity, and partly seems to suggest that his physical strength returned to him for the last mighty effort, which Jehovah, who had departed from him (ver. 20), nevertheless permitted him, in answer to his prayer, to accomplish.

23. **Dagon their god** (*cf.* 1 Sam. v. 2-5). He was the chief god of the Philistines, and generally represented as a fish with man's head and hands : a natural idea to people living on the sea coast, whose livelihood was largely dependent upon the sea and its produce. See, however, footnote on p. 7.

26. Samson's request is based on the pretext of weariness after his performances.

27. **On the roof**, which was probably flat. Underneath the lords of the Philistines seem to be seated at their banquet, while Samson was performing in front, so that the spectators on the roof could see him as well as those below.

28. **Be at once avenged . . . for my two eyes.** A remarkable alternative translation is given in R. V. margin, **be avenged . . . for one of my two eyes**, a phrase which shows (according to Keil and Delitzsch) how painfully he felt the loss of his two eyes, "the severity of which even the terrible vengeance which he was meditating could never outweigh" (Bertheau).

29. **The two middle pillars.** Our ignorance of Philistine architecture in general, and of this building in particular, is such that no certain explanation of the description given us is possible. It may be that the roof was supported in front by four pillars, one at either end, and two closer together in the middle. This arrangement would account for the massacre that Samson was able to effect by pulling down the two middle pillars.

Brethren probably means near kinsmen. Samson seems to have had no brothers (xiii. 2, 24). **In the burying-place of Manoah his father**, who was therefore probably dead, though Milton in the *Samson Agonistes* represents him as still alive. **He judged Israel twenty years.** See note on xv. 20.

APPENDIX.

I.

THE TRANSFERENCE OF THE IMAGE-WORSHIP WHICH EPHRAIM
HAD SET UP IN MOUNT EPHRAIM TO LAISH-DAN.

Chapters xvii. and xviii.

THE two incidents next to be related belong to the troublous and unsettled times which followed almost immediately after the death of Joshua, when Aaron's grandson was still alive (xx. 28), and Moses' great-grandson was still a young man (xviii. 30), while the Book of Ruth, which may to some extent be considered a third appendix, refers to a somewhat later period "when the judges ruled" (Ruth i. 1), perhaps to the days of Gideon.*

In those early days, when "there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes," a man named Micah was living in the hill country of Ephraim. His mother had lost eleven hundred shekels of silver, and had cursed the thief. Terrified by his mother's curse, Micah confessed to her that he had taken the money. Whereupon the mother annuls her curse with a blessing, and still further offers that Micah should keep the money to make two images for the private chapel which he maintained, together with an ephod and teraphim, and one of his sons for priest. But Micah pre-

* "The Book of Ruth is not a mere (say a third) appendix to the Book of Judges, but a small independent work, which does indeed resemble the two appendices of the Book of Judges so far as the incidents recorded in it fall within the period of the Judges; but on the other hand it has a thoroughly distinctive character, both in form and contents, and has nothing in common with the Book of Judges either in style or language" (Keil and Delitzsch).

ferred to restore the money intact, and so the mother sent two hundred pieces of it to "the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image," and apparently kept the rest for general purposes.

Later on, a young Levite, who had been sojourning at Bethlehem in Judah, but had left it in search of a home elsewhere, happened to come to Micah's house in his wanderings. When Micah learned his story, he invited him to become his private chaplain (or priest) at a small stipend (about 22s. 6d.) a year, in place of his son, who had hitherto performed the office. The young Levite, whose name we are led to infer was Jonathan the son (? grandson) of Gershom, the son of Moses, agreed to this proposal, and was installed in the household as priest by Micah, who in his mistaken zeal felt sure that Jehovah would approve of his having a Levite in that office.

After this again, Micah's house was visited by five "men of valour," who had been sent out by the tribe of Dan to find territory which could be easily occupied and would be suitable for emigrants from that tribe; for hitherto the Amorites had kept Dan out of the best part of the inheritance assigned to them by Joshua. These five spies, then, came in their search to Mount Ephraim, and when they were close to Micah's house, overhearing the Levite talking, they recognised by his accent that he was not a native of that district, and so turned in and learned the reason of his being there. Then they begged him to consult God by means of the ephod whether their journey would be successful, and after lodging there that night and receiving a favourable answer from the Levite, they started on their way, which led them to the extreme north of Palestine. There they came upon a town called Laish, which, being perhaps a Zidonian colony, had adopted the unwarlike, commercial habits of the Phœnicians, and would therefore, they thought, fall an easy prey to an unexpected attack.

So they returned to their own people with the tidings that in Laish they had found all that they wanted. Thereupon six hundred men, fully armed, set out from Zorah and Eshtaol in Dan, and after an interval spent in training at an encampment to the west of Kiriath-jearim (afterwards called Mahaneh-dan to commemorate the fact), the small but efficient troop started upon their expedition. On their way through the hill country of

Ephraim they too came to Micah's house, and the five spies, who were with them to show the way, suggested that they should carry off Micah's images, ephod and teraphim, as being likely to be useful to them in their new home. So they turned aside and came to that part of the house where the young Levite had his lodgings. The five spies went in and greeted him with friendliness, and brought him out to the gateway, where the six hundred armed men had halted. Then the five returned into the house to bring down the treasures out of the shrine, and at first the priest protested and tried to stop them; but the others soon won him over by suggesting that he should come with them. Was it not better to be priest to a tribe and family in Israel than to the house of one man? The prospect delighted the young priest's heart, and taking up the treasures, which the five had now brought down, he took his place with them in the midst of the company. Then the six hundred started off again, putting "the little ones and the cattle and the goods" in front for fear of an attack in the rear. We must suppose that Micah and his neighbours (or retainers) had been absent for some reason when the Danites came; but as soon as they returned and became aware of the robbery that had taken place, they went in pursuit, but did not overtake the Danites till they had gone a good way off. When the pursuers reach them, the Danites coolly turn round and ask Micah, "What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company?" "How can you ask what aileth me," says Micah, "when you have taken away all that I prize most?" But their only reply is, "If thou sayest more, thou wilt but move us to anger, and lose your own and your household's lives." And without more ado on they march again; and Micah, seeing that his party was no match for them in numbers and strength, was fain to go back without redress. Meanwhile, the Danite adventurers were no less successful in their attack on Laish than they had been in their raid on Micah. They found the people "quiet and secure," and "smote them with the edge of the sword" and "burnt the city with fire;" for, far as they were from Zidon, and independent of others as they had lived, there was none to deliver them in their hour of need. Then the Danites rebuilt the city in their own way, changed its name to "Dan," and took up their abode in it. The image they had stolen from Micah was set up as their centre of worship, and

Jonathan (the young Levite) and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the time, some three hundred years later, when the ark was captured by the Philistines and God's sanctuary was removed from Shiloh.

Notes on the Text.

xvii. 2. **Eleven hundred pieces of silver** (so xvi. 5), *i.e.*, nearly £124. **In mine ears**, *i.e.*, in my hearing.

3. A.V., **I had wholly dedicated**; R.V., **I verily dedicate**; margin, *or had dedicated*. **A graven image and a molten image**, viz., two separate and differently wrought figures. See xviii. 17, 18.

4. **Took two hundred pieces**. It is not stated what she did with the remaining nine hundred pieces. Perhaps it went in the other expenses of ver. 5, or, if the ephod, &c., had been made previously, in maintaining the services. More probably they were not given to religious purposes at all.

5. A.V., **an house of gods**; margin of R.V., **an house of God**. **Ephod**. So Gideon in chap. viii. 27. **Teraphim**. Images of household goods like the Roman lares and penates (*cf.* Gen. xxxi. 19, 31, 34; 1 Sam. xix. 13; and Hos. iii. 4). **Consecrated**. The Hebrew phrase used here and elsewhere, "filled the hand of," is very expressive.

6 accounts for the existence of what is stated in ver. 5. **In those days**. See on xviii. 1. **No king in Israel**. This statement is repeated four times in these two appendices to Judges (*viz.*, here, xviii. 1, xix. 1, and xxi. 25), and seems to show that their author lived in days when the kingship had been established.

Beth-lehem-judah. The well-known place a few miles south of Jerusalem. It was not a Levitical town, and he only "sojourned" there, *i.e.*, was not a native nor a regular resident. Hence also he was "of the family of Judah," not by descent, but by being so reckoned for civil purposes (Keil and Delitzsch).

10. **A father and a priest**. "Father" has always been an honourable title for ministers of religion and the like. So xviii. 18. **Ten shekels of silver** = about 22s. 6d.

12. **Became his priest**, either as well as his son (ver. 5), or more probably instead of him.

13. He was mistaken, as the sequel shows.

xviii. 1. A.V. (*all their*) **inheritance**. The R.V. omits the word "all," but it must be implied, because they obviously had some sort of possession already. In i. 34 we read that the Amorites had forced them into the hill country. From this reference, and that in xviii. 30, it is with probability conjectured that the events of this narrative took place shortly after the death of Joshua.

2. A.V., **from their coasts** (*i.e.*, borders); R.V., **from their whole number**. Zorah and Eshtaol (*cf.* xiii. 2, xvi. 31).

3. **Knew the voice**, *i.e.*, recognised by his dialect that he was not a native of Mount Ephraim (*cf.* xii. 6), Keil and Delitzsch. A.V., **what makest thou?** An antiquated use of "make," altered by R.V. to **what doest thou?**

6. **Before the Lord** (*sc.* known to and approved by Him, *cf.* Prov. v. 21).

7. **Laish** (= lion). In Josh. xix. 47 it is called Leshem. The name was altered to Dan after its conquest by the Danites (ver. 29). It is the modern Tel el Kady, and was the northernmost city of the Israelites (*cf.* xx. 1, &c.), almost due east of Tyre, on one of the sources of the Jordan. It may have been a colony of Sidon. **After the manner of the Zidonians**, *i.e.*, by trade and commerce, not by war. A.V., **no magistrate in the land**; R.V., **none in the land possessing authority** (Heb., **power of restraint**). **Put them to shame**; margin of R.V., **do any hurt**. The phrase then implies the lack either of any governor at all or of a tyrannical governor. **Far from the Zidonians**. About thirty miles across country. **No business with any man**, and so no allies in case of an emergency.

10. **Secure**, *i.e.*, careless in fancied security (as in ver. 7). **A large land**, *i.e.*, with plenty of room to expand in.

11. A.V., **appointed**; R.V., **girt**. So vers. 16, 17.

12. **Kirjath-jearim**. The modern Kuryet el Enab, about ten miles west of Jerusalem, on the borders of Judah and Benjamin (Josh. xviii. 14). The ark remained there from its restoration by the Philistines till the time of David. **Mahanah-dan**. See xiii. 25. The fact that this encamping of the six hundred Danites gave the place a permanent name seems to imply a prolonged

stay there (Keil and Delitzsch). They may have gone into training there so as to be properly prepared for their expedition. **Behind**, *i.e.*, to the west of.

15. **A.V., saluted him ; R.V., asked him of his welfare.**

18, 19, explain more clearly what has already been stated in ver. 17. The six hundred persuade the priest, as he stands at the door, to go with them before (or perhaps whilst) the five spies go up into the shrine and bring down its contents.

20. **Took** (*sc.* from the five, who had taken them out of the house in ver. 17).

21. **Put the little ones, &c., before them**, for safety in case of an attack by Micah's people in the rear. **A.V., the carriage**—an obsolete use of the word = portable goods (*cf.* 1 Sam. xvii. 22) ; **R.V., the goods.**

25. Do not exasperate us with your words, lest you pay for it with your lives.

27. **A.V., at quiet.** (*N.B.*—"Quiet" is here a substantive governed by preposition *at*.)

28. **Beth-rehob.** Probably mentioned also in Numb. xiii. 21 and 2 Sam. x. 6, 8. Exact site unknown.

30. **Jonathan the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh.** For "Manasseh" R.V. adopts into the text an older reading, "Moses," putting "Manasseh" in the margin. Jonathan is almost certainly to be identified with the young man who had become Micah's priest. The *son* of Gershom (see Exod. ii. 22, xviii. 3) would be too old, however soon after the death of Joshua, to be described as young ; hence it is more likely he was his *grandson* (and the Hebrew use allows of this). The alteration of Moses into Manasseh (which in the written Hebrew only requires the insertion of "n" between the "M" and "s") is said to be due to the dislike of a direct and near descendant of Moses being connected with false worship.

Until the day of the captivity of the land. This note of time must be taken in connection with the statement in the next verse (31), that Micah's graven image was set up "all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh." This alone prevents the reference being to the Assyrian or Babylonian captivity (2 Kings xv. 29, &c.). The tabernacle which was set up in Shiloh (Josh. xviii. 1) was still there in the time of Eli and Samuel (1 Sam. iii. 21, iv. 3), but by the time of Saul it was

removed to Nob (1 Sam. xxi.). Hence the captivity referred to is either some unrecorded Syrian captivity (*cf.* 1 Sam. xiv. 47), or more probably the capture of the ark by the Philistines (1 Sam. iv. 21, 22), which seemed to the Israelites to involve the captivity of the whole nation (*cf.* Ps. lxxviii. 62-64) as well as the removal of God's sanctuary from Shiloh.

II.

THE OUTRAGE AT GIBEAH, THE CONSEQUENT WAR WITH BENJAMIN, AND THE MEANS TAKEN TO PROVIDE THE REMNANT WITH WIVES.

Chapters xix.-xxi.

WHILE Phinehas, Aaron's grandson, was still high priest, the concubine of a Levite, who was sojourning on the northern side of Mount Ephraim, played him false and went back to her father's house at Beth-lehem-judah. At the end of four months the husband went after her to induce her with kind words to come back. The father-in-law was glad to receive him, and entertained him hospitably for two days. On the third day he prepared to depart early, but was persuaded to stay one night more. The next day he again rose early to be gone, but was kept by his host till the evening, and then, in spite of further invitations, made good his departure with his concubine and servant. By the time they reached Jebus (afterwards Jerusalem) the day was far spent, and the servant suggested they should spend the night there. But the Levite refused to lodge in the "city of a stranger" as it then was, and in an evil moment, as the event proved, determined to go on as far as Gibeah or Ramah. The sun set as they drew near Gibeah, which belonged to Benjamin, and the little party therefore went to seek lodging there; but though they had provision for man and beast, and only needed room to rest, they did not succeed, and were fain to sit down in the city-street. After a while an old man, who was from the hills of Ephraim, but sojourned in Gibeah, saw the wayfarers as he returned late from work in the fields, and accosted them. When he found they were on their way back to his own country, Ephraim, he refused to do less than provide

for all their wants himself. "So he brought them into his house and gave" them and their beasts entertainment. "As they were making their hearts merry," certain abandoned men of the city beset the house, beating at the door, and making infamous demands for the delivering up of his guest. In vain the old man protested, and at last, unintelligible as such conduct is to us in these days, he yielded so far as to give up the woman instead into their wicked hands. So foully did they outrage her that she could but drag herself "in the dawning of the day" to the man's threshold and die. There, with arms outstretched, her lord found her when he rose and opened the door. "Up and let us be going," he said, "but none answered." In speechless indignation he laid the corpse upon the ass, and went home; and there arrived, divided it limb by limb into twelve pieces, one of which he sent to every tribe of Israel. So deeply impressed were they, just as he had expected, with the horror of the outrage at which this silent summons hinted, that the whole congregation "assembled as one man" in Jehovah's awful presence at Mizpeh to "consider of it, take counsel, and speak." "Four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword," "the chiefs of all the people," "presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God." The solemn question was put, "Tell us, how was this wickedness brought to pass?" And the murdered woman's husband briefly narrated the facts, and asked for advice and counsel concerning those who had committed "lewdness and folly in Israel." Then all the people arose as one man and said, We will not return home till we have proceeded "by lot" against Gibeah, and have treated it as God bade us treat the Canaanites. Ten men out of every hundred shall go and fetch victual for the host, while the rest remain here in readiness.

Meanwhile the tribe of Benjamin knew what was being done, and conscience-stricken, held aloof. Before proceeding to extremities, the other tribes sent messengers through all the families of Benjamin, urging them to deliver up the criminals to justice. But "Benjamin would not hearken to the voice of their brethren," but gathered themselves together at Gibeah for battle: 26,000 men, besides 700 chosen men of Gibeah. Of this host 700 were skilled at slinging with the left-hand. The 400,000 Israelites that were against them were so confident of

victory that when they went up and consulted God at Bethel, where Phinehas the high priest had temporarily removed the ark from Shiloh, besides forgetting to address him as Jehovah, they did but ask, "Who shall go up first to battle?" "Judah first," was the Lord's reply. But in the engagement that took place soon after at Gibeah, 22,000 Israelites were "destroyed down to the ground." In spite of this reverse the men of Israel did not lose their self-trust and presumption, though in half repentance they did bethink them of their covenant God's true name. When therefore they had "wept before the Lord until even," and asked Him whether they should again draw nigh to battle against their brethren, His answer was, "Go up again." A second time the issue was against them, and 18,000 men of Israel fell, and one-tenth of the whole host was now destroyed. Then at last the lesson was learned, and they realised the foolish spirit of self-confidence in which they had acted; and all the people went up to Bethel in deep humility, and made their peace with Jehovah by fasting and sacrifice. This time they put themselves entirely in His hands: "Shall I yet again go out to battle, or shall I cease?" "And the Lord said, Go up; for to-morrow I will deliver him into thine hand."

This third time they no longer trusted to mere numerical strength, but had recourse to stratagem. They took 10,000 picked men and set them in ambush near the city at a spot called Maareh-geba, while the rest arrayed themselves at Beth-Tamar, as at other times. The main body then attacked the Benjamites, and by pretending to flee, drew them right away from the city on to highways in the open country. Meanwhile, as soon as the city became defenceless, the ambush came out, and rushing in, put all that were left to the sword. Then raising the appointed signal of a cloud of smoke from the midst of the city, they marched forth to meet and finish the destruction of the Benjamites, who, as much surprised and panic-stricken by the sight of the smoke as the others were elated, were now in full retreat towards Gibeah. So great was the havoc thus inflicted that upwards of 25,000 Benjamites were slain, and only a remnant of 600 escaped northwards towards the wilderness, and took refuge for four months in the rock of Rimmon. Not only Gibeah was sacked and set on fire: the same punishment was meted out to all the other cities in Benjamin.

Within four months of this signal act of vengeance, compassion sprang up in the Israelites' hearts for their brethren's destruction, and they half repented of the oath they had taken not to give their daughters to Benjamin in marriage. They went to Bethel, and "sat there till even before God," weeping and asking why it was the Lord's will that there should be one tribe lacking in Israel that day through their oath? how should they provide wives for the remnant that was left? After sacrifices had been duly offered, it occurred to them to inquire whether any family or tribe had neglected the summons to appear at Mizpah; and it was found on going through the muster-roll that no one had come from Jabesh-gilead. This was always held a heinous offence in Israel, and they determined now to punish Jabesh, and help to restore the tribe of Benjamin by the same act. So they sent 12,000 of their bravest men to destroy every human being in Jabesh but the unmarried maidens. This they did, and brought back 400 such women to the camp at Shiloh, whom the congregation sent with messages of peace as wives for the 600 men who had taken refuge in Rimmon. Some 200 were still wanting, however, and the elders of the congregation felt it their duty to devise some further plan to supply them. And this is what they did devise. One of the three great annual feasts was close at hand; at Shiloh it was kept especially by the maidens of the place with dances in the vineyards. The still-wifeless Benjamites were bidden to lie in wait on this occasion in the vineyards, and carry off "every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh." Retreat would be easy, as the highroad between Shechem and Bethel ran on the west of Shiloh, and they need not therefore go near the city. The elders further promised to win over the fathers or the brothers when they made complaint, asking them to acquiesce, and pointing out that their oath was not violated, because their consent had not been asked for. In this way the means of repairing the breach in Israel were found. The 600 "returned unto their inheritance, and built the cities and dwelt in them;" and the congregation of the Israelites departed each "to his tribe and to his family." "In those days," it is for the fourth time added, "there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Notes on the Text.

xix. 1. **No king in Israel** (*cf.* xvii. 6). **Sojourning** (*cf.* xvii. 8).

A.V., **on the side of Mount Ephraim**; R.V., **on the farther side of the hill country of Ephraim**, *i.e.*, the northern part of that district, probably in the neighbourhood of Shiloh (*ver.* 18, and xxi. 19).

2. A.V. margin, **a year and four months** is incorrect.

3. **A couple of asses**, *i.e.*, one for himself and one to take back his wife upon; but A.V., **to bring her again**, is less correct than R.V. margin, **to bring it** (*sc.* her heart) **again**, a much more expressive phrase.

4. **Three days**—that is, probably, two nights.

9. **The day groweth to an end**—*lit.*, it is the declining of the day. The A.V. margin has no justification, **it is the pitching** (time) **of the day**. **Go home**—*lit.*, to thy tents.

10. **Over against Jebus**. The road from Bethlehem to Shiloh probably passed close by Jerusalem.

11. **The day was far spent**. They had not started till the afternoon (*ver.* 9), and Jerusalem is a two hours' journey from Bethlehem.

12. **The city of a stranger**. This statement helps to fix the date soon after Joshua's death (*cf.* i. 21). **To Gibeah** (=hill). The modern Tel-el-Jul, a few miles north of Jerusalem: Saul's home (1 Sam. xi. 4).

13. **In Ramah** (=height). Modern ʿr-Ram, a place not far from Gibeah, more to the north.

18. A.V. and R.V., **and I am (now) going to the house of the Lord** (*sc.* at Shiloh). The Septuagint translation is "I am going to my home." Keil and Delitzsch seem right in translating it, "I walk (*sc.* minister) at the Lord's house, and (yet) no one receives me into his house."

19. It was the usual practice for travellers to supply themselves with all that they wanted in the "inn." The inn-keeper was expected to provide nothing but safe and dry night-quarters. **Handmaid—servants** (*sc.* his wife and himself).

20. **Howsoever**, *i.e.*, he declines his guest's offer.

22. **Sons of Belial** = base fellows. **Belial** = worthlessness.

Cf. Deut. xiii. 13 ; 2 Cor. vi. 15, &c. ; and for the whole outrage, *cf.* Gen. xix.

28. **None answered.** A pathetic way of saying she was dead (which the Septuagint adds).

29. **A.V., together with her bones ; R.V. more correctly, limb by limb ; Heb. according to her bones.** *Cf.* Lev. i. 6, and also 1 Sam. xi. 7.

A.V., coasts ; R.V., borders.

30. **And it was so that, &c.** The connection seems rather to be, as Keil and Delitzsch, "He did this symbolical act in the expectation that every one who saw it would say, &c." And his expectation was fulfilled, as the sequel shows.

xx. 1. **From Dan** (*i.e.*, Laish, xviii. 29) in the north, **even to Beer-sheba** in the south, **with the land of Gilead** on the east of Jordan, **unto the Lord** (*i.e.*, solemnly as in His presence), **in** (R.V., **at**) **Mizpeh** (=watch tower), now called nebi-Samwil (1 Sam. vii. 6), on the western border of Benjamin. Different to the Mizpeh of x. 17.

5. **Thought to have slain me.** Rather an exaggeration, but perhaps justified by what had been done to the woman.

8. **To his tent.** The sense would be clearer by substituting "our tents."

9. **(We will go up) against it by lot.** Rather, "we will deal with Gibeah by lot" as was ordered to be done with the towns of the Canaanites (Numb. xxxiii. 54). The drawing of lots, mentioned in ver. 10, is only a subordinate detail in the carrying out of the measure.

10. **Gibeah.** The margin of R.V. observes that the Hebrew text, probably by mistake, reads **Geba** (a different place) here and in ver. 33.

12. **Sent, i.e., had previously sent** before finally deciding on the expedition (as in ver. 11).

15. **Twenty-six thousand men.** R.V. margin, "according to some ancient authorities (*e.g.*, LXX. and Vulgate) twenty-five thousand." This is an attempt to reconcile the figures here with those in vers. 35, 44-47, but at least one thousand must have fallen in the first two repulses of the Israelites. **Seven hundred chosen men.** These are apparently not identical with the "seven hundred chosen men" of ver. 16, who were from the whole host.

16. **Left-handed** (*cf.* iii. 15).

18. A.V., **the house of God** ; R.V., **Beth-el**, viz., the place of that name on the north border of Benjamin. **Asked counsel of God** (*sc.* Elohim, not Jehovah). The ark seems to have been temporarily removed from Shiloh for the purpose (*ver.* 27).

23. Before the second engagement the Israelites correct *one* of their previous mistakes, and in penitence address themselves to "Jehovah," not "Elohim," but still show presumption and self-confidence (*ver.* 22).

25. One-tenth (18,000 + 22,000) of the whole host are now destroyed.

26. After their two heavy defeats the Israelites correct their other mistake, and approach Jehovah with due humility.

27. **In those days** = temporarily (*cf.* *ver.* 18).

28. **Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron**. An important note of time, approximately fixing the date of the narrative.

31. **In the field** (of battle), which was in the neighbourhood of Gibeah, and where one highway led to the town and another to Bethel on the north.

33. **Baal-tamar** (tamar = palm). Perhaps a small village where a shrine of Baal stood under a palm-tree.

A.V., **meadows of Gibeah** ; R.V., **Maareh-geba** ; margin, *or, the meadow of Geba* (or Gibeah, see *ver.* 10). The word "Maareh" is said to mean "open ground," which seems unsuitable for an ambush. The LXX. also leave it as a proper name.

35 gives the issue of the battle, while *vers.* 36-46 proceed to explain the details of it, this order being in accordance with the manner of Hebrew historians. Notice the remarkable similarity of the whole story to that of the siege of Ai (*Josh.* vii. and viii.), a town in the same neighbourhood (as remarked by Dr. Thornton in S.P.C.K. edition).

Twenty-five thousand and one hundred men (*in ver.* 46 twenty-five thousand). Perhaps the expression here (and also in xvi. 5, xvii. 2) denotes "*upwards* of twenty-five thousand," or it may be a more exact calculation than that in *ver.* 46.

37. **Drew themselves along**. The same verb as "draw on" in iv. 6. It expresses "orderly marching." There seems no support for the A.V. margin, **made a long** (sound with the trumpet), *Josh.* vi. 5.

38. A.V., **flame with smoke**; R.V. more accurately, **cloud of smoke**. So also in ver 40, "cloud" for "flame."

39-41. The margin of R.V. arranges these clauses in the clearest way. The historian begins to explain the details about the "cloud of smoke" in one sentence ("And the men of Israel turned in the battle"), but immediately interrupts that sentence with a long parenthesis ("now Benjamin . . . to heaven"), and finally resumes the original sentence in ver. 41 ("And the men of Israel turned") and finishes it.

42. **Unto the way of the wilderness**, *i.e.*, north-east towards the desert, which lies between Bethel and Jericho.

A.V., **them which came out of the cities** (*sc.* to aid Gibeah) **they destroyed**, though relegated to the margin by R.V., seems more correct than the R.V. text, **they which came . . . destroyed them**. A.V., **in the midst of them**; R.V. better, **in the midst thereof** (*sc.* of the wilderness).

43. A.V., **with ease**; margin, *or*, **from Menuchah**; R.V., **at (their) resting place**; margin, *or*, **at Menuhah**.

45. **Rock of Rimmon** (= pomegranate), modern Rummôn, a village still to be seen perched on a conspicuous limestone mountain about three miles east of Bethel. **Gidom** (=desolate). Site unknown, but probably between Gibeah and Rimmon.

48. A.V., **as well the men of (every) city**; R.V., **both the entire city**; margin, *or*, *as otherwise read*, **the inhabited city**. See Deut. ii. 34. *N.B.*—The Benjamites were treated like the Canaanites, because their sin was the same.

xxi. 1. **Sworn in Mizpeh** (see xx. 9), where, however, this part of the oath is not expressly stated, nor is that mentioned in ver. 5, as to which chap. v. 23 may be compared.

2. A.V., **house of God**; R.V., **Bethel**, as in xx. 18, 26.

8. **Jabesh-gilead**. Site unknown. Perhaps the modern ed Deir in the Wadi Yabis, in the northern part of Gad. Jabesh and Gibeah are again associated on the same side in 1 Sam. xi. 5 and xxxi. 11 through Saul.

12. **Shiloh** (= resting place), **which is in the land of Canaan**. So described to distinguish it from Jabesh in Gilead. Its situation is exactly defined in ver. 19. Its modern name is Seilun.

13. **Which were in the rock of Rimmon** (*cf.* xx. 47).

19. **Feast of the Lord**, *i.e.*, one of the three annual feasts.

Dr. Thornton (S.P.C.K. edition) thinks that of Tabernacles in September more probable, because then the vines would be in full leaf, and would therefore afford better shelter, and because dancing suits better with that than with the festival of the Pass-over. The exact geographical position of Shiloh is marked to show that they could easily make good their escape to the south by the highroad which runs between Shechem and Bethel, without having to go near Shiloh. "Labonah" is the modern Lubban, north-west of Shiloh.

22. A.V., **be favourable unto them for our sakes**; R.V., **grant them graciously** (margin, *as a gift*) **unto us** (*sc.* the elders speaking on behalf of the Benjamites). A.V., **in the war**; R.V., **in battle** (*sc.* with Jabesh). A.V., **for**. More correct, though less clear than the R.V. **neither**. An ellipse must be supplied, and the last two clauses thus paraphrased (You need not be afraid to do this), for you did not give your daughters to the Benjamites; in that case you would have been guilty (in respect of the vow we have all made, but by this plan you will be free).

23. We are reminded of the "rape of the Sabine virgins" by the followers of Romulus in Roman legends.

25. The narrative ends with the solemn repetition of an already thrice made statement (*viz.*, xvii. 6; xviii. 1; xix. 1).

EXAMINATION QUESTIONS.

(Arranged nearly in the order of the narrative.)

1. What is the probable date of the book's compilation?
2. What passages in Judges are more or less similar to other passages (1) in Joshua, (2) in Numbers, (3) in Deuteronomy? How is the similarity to be accounted for?
3. Mention the various calculations given (1) in the Bible itself, (2) by modern commentators, of the length of time covered by the events of this book.
4. What were the chief ordinary functions of a judge? Do we meet with similar officers elsewhere?
5. How do you account (1) for the want of cohesion between the tribes noticeable in the records; (2) for the scarcity of traces of the Mosaic law and observances?
6. Make a tabular list of the judges, with the district delivered by each, and the enemy from whom it was delivered.
7. Which of them seem to have been simple warriors, not administrators, and *vice versa*?
8. Make an analysis of the contents of the book, and distinguish the different styles.
9. Who is the traditionally accepted author of the book? Are there any reasons for or against him?
10. Which of the tribes is omitted in chap. i.?
11. What happened to Adoni-bezek, and why?
12. What were the old names of Hebron, Debir, Bethel?
13. What incidents are recorded in chap. i. in connection with these cities?
14. Give details showing to what extent (according to chap. i.) Canaan was taken possession of by the Israelites during this period.
15. What does Bochim mean? What happened there?

16. How old was Joshua at his death, and where was he buried?
17. What do you know of *Baal*, *Ashtaroth*, *Asheroth*?
18. Write an account of Othniel's deliverance. Who was he?
19. Where is Mesopotamia?
20. Why is it mentioned that Ehud was "left-handed?" In what other places are left-handed Benjaminites mentioned?
21. How did Ehud make good his escape?
22. Explain the word "quarries" and "summer-parlour" (in chap. iii.).
23. Describe the situation of Harosheth, Tabor, Kishon.
24. What does Barak mean? Do we seem to meet with the name elsewhere in history?
25. What does Debōrah mean? What was her prophecy about the result of the expedition? How was it fulfilled?
26. What do you know of the Kenites?
27. Explain these phrases (in chap. v.)—
 - (a) The highways were unoccupied.
 - (β) Ye that ride on white asses.
 - (γ) They that handle the pen of the writer.
 - (δ) Asher abode in his breaches.
 - (e) The stars in their courses fought against Sisera.
 - (ξ) Curse ye Meroz.
 - (η) She put her hand to the nail.
28. Explain "(the Midianites) came in *as locusts*" (R.V.).
29. What was Gideon doing when the angel appeared to his father? Why was he doing it where he was?
30. What happened further on the same occasion?
31. About how much is an *ephah*?
32. What was the tree under which the angel was seated?
33. What name did Gideon give the altar that he built, and what does it mean?
34. What was Gideon ordered to do the same night?
35. What name did he receive for doing it? What does it mean?
36. Explain the nature of the two signs which God gave Gideon that would "save Israel by his hand."
37. Where did the Midianites pitch their camp? Describe the position of Gideon's camp.
38. Explain the process by which Gideon reduced his army to three hundred.

39. How did Gideon get encouragement from the enemy for the encounter?

40. Describe the stratagem by which he routed the enemy.

41. What were the names of the four Midianite princes? Where else do we hear of them in Old Testament? Where were the two lesser ones slain?

42. "Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?" Explain these words and their application.

43. What did (1) Succoth, (2) Peniel, do to offend Gideon? How and when did he punish them?

44. Why did Gideon visit Zebah and Zalmunna with death? Whom did he ask to slay them, and why did he refuse?

45. (α) "As thou art, so are they." (β) "As the man is, so is his strength." Explain these words.

46. What were the ornaments that Gideon took from the camels' necks?

47. After this conquest, what request did the men of Israel make to Gideon, and what was his answer?

48. What did he do which "became a snare unto him and to his house?"

49. What reason is given for the presence of so many golden earrings among the spoil?

50. By what arguments did Abimelech win over the men of Shechem?

51. How did he get enough money to hire his band of satellites? How much was it?

52. Who was Jotham? Narrate and interpret his parable.

53. What probably was "the house of Millo?"

54. Explain in chap. ix. (with particular reference to margin of R.V.)—

(α) The plain of the pillar that was in Shechem.

(β) There came down people by the middle of the land.

(γ) The plain of Meonenim.

55. Who were (1) Gaal, (2) Zebul? What part did each take in the rising of the Shechemites against Abimelech?

56. "Thou seest the shadow of the mountains as if they were men." Explain this.

57. Describe the ways in which Abimelech wreaked his vengeance on Shechem and its inhabitants.

58. How did he meet with his death?
59. Parse the words italicised in "*all to brake his skull.*"
60. What is told us about Jair? Who bears the same name in New Testament?
61. "Maonites" (x. 12). Is anything known of them? What is the LXX. reading here?
62. From what district did Jephthah spring? How came he to be living in the land of Tob on the outbreak of war?
63. What was Jephthah's bargain with the elders of Gilead?
64. What arguments did the Ammonites use when Jephthah sent messengers to them, and how did he answer them?
65. "Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess?" Explain this.
66. What was Jephthah's vow? How was it fulfilled?
67. Why did a quarrel arise between the men of Ephraim and of Gilead?
68. What was the test by which the fleeing Ephraimites were detected at the fords of Jordan?
69. Name in order the three who "judged Israel" after Jephthah.
70. What was a *Nazirite*? What Nazirites do we read of in the Bible?
71. Narrate the circumstances of Samson's birth.
72. Which was his tribe, and what was its geographical position?
73. What was his riddle and its answer, and what gave rise to it?
74. "If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle." Explain this.
75. How did Samson take vengeance on the Philistines for his father-in-law's breach of faith?
76. What do (1) Ramath-lehi, (2) En-hakkore, mean? What happened at these places?
77. What is the play upon words in xv. 16?
78. Make a list of Samson's feats of strength.
79. How far is Gaza from Hebron? What is probably meant by "the mountain that is before Hebron?" (xvi. 3).
80. Describe the various ways in which Delilah tried, and at last contrived to betray Samson into the Philistines' hands.
81. What is the alternative rendering for "green withs" (xvi. 7) in the margin of R.V.?
82. "She fastened it with the pin" (xvi. 14). Explain this.
83. What is known about Dagon? Where do we read of him in other parts of the Old Testament?

84. Draw a plan of the temple precincts, showing the probable arrangement of "the pillars," "the roof," &c., mentioned in the narrative (xvi. 21-31).

85. Narrate the circumstances of Samson's death.

86. What internal signs are there that the last five chapters belong to an earlier period than the bulk of the book?

87. How much does "eleven hundred *pieces* of silver" amount to in our money? On what two occasions is the sum mentioned in Judges?

88. Narrate the incidents which led up to Micah's having a Levite for priest in his house.

89. On what terms did Micah engage him?

90. "Unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto Dan." Can this be accounted for?

91. On what business were the five Danites bent when they came to Micah's house? Why did they recognise the Levite?

92. Where is Laish? Quote and explain the language in which the state of its inhabitants is described (in xviii. 7).

93. Explain the terms *ephod*, *teraphim*, *graven image*, *molten image*.

94. Relate the expedition in which the Danites captured Laish and robbed Micah's house on the way.

95. Jonathan the son of Gershom, *the son of Moses . . .* were priests . . . of the Danites *until the day of the captivity of the land*. So they set up Micah's graven image . . . *all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh*. Comment on the statements italicised in this passage. What other reading is there for "Moses?"

96. "There was no such deed done nor seen from the day that the children of Israel came up out of Egypt unto this day." Relate briefly the main facts that occasioned this remark.

97. Explain the phrase "sons of Belial."

98. How many did (1) the Benjamites, (2) the men of Gibeah number when they mustered against the rest of Israel?

99. What special skill in fighting are seven hundred of them recorded to have possessed?

100. Describe the course of the war which the tribes waged on Benjamin.

101. What were the causes of their defeat at first?

102. Who was high priest, and where was the ark at the time?

103. How was Gibeah taken?

104. What happened at the rock of Rimmon?

105. How did the Benjamites provide themselves with wives after this disaster?

106. "There is a feast of the Lord" (xxi. 19). Which feast is most probably meant, and why?

107. Describe the position of Shiloh (according to xxi. 19).

108. What reasons does the historian himself suggest more than once for the low state of morality indicated in the last five chapters?

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